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ABSTRACT

Part of an effort to increase the capacity of local citizens to address critical issues facing their communities, this paper reports on a project to develop and test a replicable process for organizing community forums at community colleges. Following introductory remarks, the first section discusses the role of the community college in community development, examining tensions related to implementing development activities and proposing five skill areas of a new development curriculum: grassroots involvement, mediation, collaboration, understanding systems behind issues, and leadership. The next section presents guidelines for conducting community development forums, covering initial appointments, planning the event, building external and internal support, promoting the event, hosting the event, and providing closure. Finally, nine case studies of forums at community colleges are presented, including reports on forums discussing: (1) health care at Santa Fe Community College, Florida, by Chester Leathers and Judy Skelton; (2) economic revitalization at Lane Community College, Oregon, by Jerome Garger; (3) housing at Phoenix College, Arizona, by Sheila Contreras; (4) job strategies at Delta College, Michigan, by Barbara Tedrow; (5) education for health careers at Monroe Community College, New York, by Barbara Kirk and Janet Glocker; (6) Hispanic education at North Lake College, Texas, by Joel Vela, Lynn Brink, and Sue Lee; (7) urban planning at the Seattle Community College District, Washington, by Dena Dawson and A. Barretto Ogilvie; (8) responses to crime at Kirkwood Community College, Iowa, by Richard Pankey; and (9) economic development at Cedar Valley College, Texas, by James Harlow. A discussion on using surveys to support forums is appended. (BCY)

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CATALYSTS FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE

Guidelines for Community Colleges to Conduct Community Forums

Edited by
Nancy Armes LeCroy

A Project of the League for Innovation
in the Community College
funded by
The Hitachi Foundation

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Foreword

In the memory of anyone working in a community college today, the community college has always been a community-based organization, connecting with the community to serve its special needs. For the most part, that service has been provided through programs of continuing or community education in a series of noncredit courses and activities on upgrading skills or exploring leisure time. The programs have been safe, easy, and except for an occasional course in belly-dancing, offered without controversy.

In the latter part of the 1980s, community colleges began to deepen their commitments to their communities by expanding their concept of service to the community. A few leaders in these institutions started getting out on the streets, walking back alleys, visiting housing developments and shelters for the homeless. They came face-to-face with the deterioration of community life in America, increasingly visible in their urban centers, their suburban developments, and their rural small towns. And some community colleges, many of them members of the League for Innovation, began to experiment with how the community college could respond to the social problems that were beginning to overwhelm the country.

Through its member institutions, and in conversations with staff members of the W.K. Kellogg and other foundations, the League for Innovation began to explore and assess the extent of community college involvement in deepening its services to the community. These conversations with staff members at The Hitachi Foundation led to a grant to the League in September of 1991, the largest grant The Hitachi Foundation had ever made to a community college organization. The purpose of the grant was to develop and field test a process that could be replicated nationwide to develop the capacity of local citizens to address and respond to critical issues facing their communities.

Six months later the Board of Directors and representatives of the League for Innovation met in Miami, Florida, for our spring board meeting hosted by League member, Miami-Dade Community College. For an entire day these leaders of the most resourceful community colleges in North America came face-to-face with the social problems of Miami, Florida. A microcosm of the ills that plague the nation, Miami provided an experiential laboratory for examining social problems up close. In street clothes and in small groups we visited homeless camps constructed under freeways, played with children in daycare centers, sat with Haitian immigrants waiting to inquire about citizenship, met Cuban mothers in health care clinics, toured, with police escort, the most dangerous drug distribution center in the city, talked with Puerto Rican farm workers in a cane field, and met with citizen leaders who are attempting to revitalize a section of Miami called Overtown.

Even though we touched only the safe edges of the social issues, we came away from the experience with some increased understanding of the difficulties in restoring our communities and our citizens to health. During our follow-up discussions the next day, we made a commitment in the League to place community development as one of our highest priorities.

The project funded by The Hitachi Foundation provided us with an immediate opportunity to carry out the commitment. Funds were available from Hitachi for eight colleges to participate in the project, but ten colleges wanted to participate so the League supported them from its own funds.

A national task force was organized with representatives from these ten League colleges, and they became the driving force behind the

project. The members of the task force are listed on page viii.

At the first meeting, members of the task force explored the critical issues facing their communities, and they began to be aware they were launching a complex and important initiative for community colleges. Under the leadership of the project coordinators, they began to develop a set of draft guidelines for conducting community forums, and they began to network with each other to share perspectives and resources.

Each of the participating colleges selected the issue most appropriate to its community, and the issues included health, crime, the environment, jobs, minorities, housing, and city planning. Using the draft guidelines, each college hosted a community forum involving local citizens and college staff. In so doing they built on their capacity to deepen their involvement in their communities, and as a practical matter they were field testing the guidelines to make sure they worked. In the final section of this report there is a brief case study that reviews the issue and the colleges' approach to it. Included in the case study is an assessment of the guidelines. The final guidelines, field tested in nine community colleges—one college will host a forum in the near future—are probably the best of their kind. They work in a variety of settings, address a variety of issues, and use a variety of formats. They are offered here to community colleges and other institutions of higher education and social agencies committed to the community forum as a creative, inclusive approach to working with communities on critical issues.

The League wishes to acknowledge and thank the following for their special assistance with this project:

- The ten members of the National Task Force who developed and field tested the guidelines and who shared their experience with designing and hosting the community forums.
- Nancy Armes LeCroy who assisted the project coordinator in working with the task force and who shared her extraordinary skills and personal insights in editing and preparing the material for this monograph. Her assistance was subsidized in part by the Exxon Education Foundation.
- Diane Eisenberg and James Gollattscheck of the American Association of Community Colleges who graciously shared materials from earlier projects on community development for which they had provided leadership.
- Julie Banzhaf, Program Officer at The Hitachi Foundation, who helped guide the project by asking penetrating questions that brought me back to the larger context of what we were about in the community forums. Her interest in the project, indicated in her preparation of the preface and her participation as a keynote speaker in the League's "Leadership 2000" conference held in July of 1993 where this monograph was first released, is much appreciated.
- Finally, we wish to express our appreciation to the citizens of the nine communities who participated in these forums as individuals who care greatly about the future of their communities. It is our hope that these citizens and many others in the future, by working with staff members in community colleges, can begin to make a difference in revitalizing our communities.

Terry O'Banion
Executive Director
League for Innovation
in the Community College

Preface

Amidst a rapidly changing cultural, demographic, economic, and global landscape, communities struggle to understand and grapple with increasingly complex issues. In addition to the challenges posed by a global, technology-based and human resource-driven economy, a host of seemingly intractable problems face communities today. These include, but are not limited to, the quality of education, family instability, poverty, inadequacy of social and health care service, pollution and environmental quality, transportation systems, deteriorating infrastructure, increasing crime and violence, race and ethnic relations, and building the skills of all our citizens. Strapped by financial and political constraints, state and federal governments are unable to provide comprehensive solutions to these integrated problems. Increasingly, individual citizens, community groups, and local governments are being forced to draw upon their own resources and resourcefulness to solve their most critical problems.

The Hitachi Foundation's mission is to help individuals, institutions, and communities participate effectively in a global society. As demographic shifts and global economic trends continue to have great impact on communities, communities need to be looked at in their entirety and strategies need to be increasingly integrative in order to meet the most pressing needs. A fundamental need in any community—be it an urban neighborhood, an Indian reservation, or a set of common institutions—is building and strengthening the local capacity, expertise, and leadership for change. Recognizing that the seeds of sustained revitalization lie within communities themselves, the foundation has been interested in building the capacity of people and organizations to identify their needs and to collectively develop strategies for their solution. We look for projects that represent integrative approaches to community problem-solving and develop models for innovation transfer to other communities.

Community colleges, as yet largely untapped resources, are emerging as the nexus for the resolution of both local and national concerns. Why? As the largest and fastest growing segment of higher education, they have a critical role to play in the education of the nation's citizens and in the preparation of its work force. Community colleges reflect this country's democratic idealism and its commitment to universal access and equality of educational and economic opportunity. Not only are they highly accessible to the entire citizenry, but they represent the greatest diversity in higher education and have a long history of involvement in traditional forms of citizenship education. Perhaps most importantly, community colleges play a leading role in their communities and regions. Serving as a frequent hub for local networks dealing with community problems, they are accustomed to working collaboratively with all types of community groups.

Recognizing the myriad competing priorities and challenges facing them, community colleges should reflect on what it means to be a community institution. Building community is not just a matter of bricks and mortar, or the maintenance of systems and services but rather the building of the relationships and the skills that are needed to improve the quality of life for all residents. Community colleges have a critical bridging role to play in identifying problem-solving needs and in developing the requisite partnerships and methodologies—they deal with diverse constituencies to build consensus and collaborate around specific projects; they develop processes, systems, and skills; they

serve as a neutral turf and a mediator of interests; and they provide much needed community leadership. Community colleges represent not only a microcosm of the complexities of American life, but also a catalyst for change.

Ultimately, we must return to the question: for what are we educating people? For happiness, a fulfilled life, opportunity, and physical and spiritual survival? Yes, but also to become productive, contributing members of society, a society of local, regional, national, and global dimensions. We cannot only be concerned with training and developing minds and characters, but we must also be concerned with the application of one's education to community. Otherwise, we have neither done our jobs as educators, nor fulfilled our missions as community institutions.

The Hitachi Foundation is pleased to have supported the League for Innovation's work to assist community colleges in addressing critical community issues. We hope this monograph is useful to you, as you recognize and expand your roles as catalysts for community change.

Julie Banzhaf
Director of Programs
The Hitachi Foundation

Table of Contents

	page
Foreword	iii
Preface	v
National Advisory Committee and Forum Coordinators	viii
Building on Natural Strengths: The Role of the Community College in Community Development	1
Guidelines for Conducting Community Development Forums	7
Community Forum Case Studies	21
Health Care in Crisis: Community Forums for Citizens' Input	22
Facing the Challenge Together: Creating Economic Transition in the Pacific Northwest	26
New Communities: Housing in Central Phoenix	30
Now That You Have Lost Your Job, How Are You Going to Get One Back?	34
Education for Health Career Ladders: Monroe County's Needs	37
Hispanic Education: A Community Forum to Forge Successful Partnerships	42
Seattle's Urban Villages What They Are and Where They Will Be Located	44
Can We Break the Cycle? A Forum on Crime In Our Area	47
Building Economic Futures in Southern-Most Dallas County	51
Appendix	53
Using Surveys and Data-Capture Technology in Support of Community Forums	53

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Building on Natural Strengths: The Role of the Community College in Community Development

Nancy Armes LeCroy

From its inception, the community college has fashioned its mission through a symbiotic relationship with the local community that has been fundamentally influenced by proximity and need. In effect, over its comparatively brief history, this segment of higher education has solidified first transfer, then occupational, and finally an array of community service and support roles through a give-and-take with local constituencies. This brief essay seeks first to describe the current state of the relationship, concentrating on the tensions within it, and then to suggest how the journey toward a still fuller interaction between the college and the community may be unfolding.

A Familiar Backdrop

The backdrop for this discussion has become all too familiar, displaying as it does a litany of problems associated with the deterioration of community life. To begin with, the issues with which citizens struggle on a daily basis have become exponentially more complex. They include drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, the breakdown of the family unit, environmental depletion and risk, deteriorating infrastructures, and a myriad of crippling realities associated with economic stagnation—unemployment and underemployment, declining living standards, etc. There is increasing crime, violence, homelessness; there are the nation's overburdened health care, social service, and education systems; and, of course, there are the volatile tensions associated with race, culture, and class that have stretched the fabric of communal life to dangerous limits.

More to the point, the nation's political institutions, indeed all its public institutions, have failed repeatedly in recent years to generate effective solutions to these stubborn problems that trouble people most. Much too often, public debate is adversarial and unproductive and does not address the issues. Much too often, there is little agreement about what to do to make things better. Much too often, when decisions are made, they are ineffective because public support for them is not strong enough.

Balancing Expectations

With such a panorama in full view, it is not surprising that community colleges are continually readjusting goals in order to respond effectively to critical needs. Nor is it surprising that their journey is laced with frustration and ambiguity since their vision of the future is not quite clear.

On one side is a vocal group who, when contemplating how the community college should interact with the community, posits that its mission is already dangerously overextended. Borrowing from the "stick to the knitting" rhetoric of the corporate world, these prophets strongly advise college leaders to hone in on strands within the existing mission, to not only concentrate on improving performance in these five or six areas, but to explain these elements to the public in clearer fashion. After all, the chief critics of the movement attack community colleges not for failure to broaden the mission but for failure to perform effectively the roles already set forth. Thus, the most important tasks are to ensure that transfer and technical education are strong and that all other roles provide support for these primary academic missions.

On the other side is an equally fervent group warning that the posture described above is much too static, putting community colleges at risk of becoming enmeshed in their own tradi-

tions at the very moment the larger community requires a response characterized by order of magnitude differences. Both by its placement and its history, this movement has created an expectation—virtually a psychological contract—that it will help local communities meet their most pressing needs, needs that can no longer be satisfactorily addressed through traditional academic programs. To fail to keep this underlying promise now, when the urgency is so obvious, is an abdication.

When these two perspectives are analyzed to more specifically determine the role the community college should play in the community, they may be described as poles on a continuum that include the following opposing themes:

- On one hand is the traditional community service/continuing education thrust in which the college generally uses traditional academic mechanisms to respond to community needs; on the other is a broader community development framework in which the college works side-by-side with the community to solve problems using a variety of mechanisms that extend well beyond the classroom.

- On one hand, educators determine the goals of the learning community; on the other, student and community members determine these goals.

- On one hand, implementation is based on familiar discipline structures and teaching methodologies; on the other, on new process-related skills and community-based learning strategies.

Although currently there is much give and take between these polarities, it is the contention here that local communities are increasingly pushing community colleges toward the community development side of these polarities. They have come to believe that existing educational mechanisms will not be sufficient to help their various neighborhoods restore quality of life and solve urgent problems.

Examining the Tensions Change Creates

As community colleges seek to address these changing expectations, virtually on a daily basis, several defining tensions complicate the task.

The first of these tensions could not be more basic: Who defines the need? Although few in community college circles would challenge the belief that learners have a key role to play in defining their own academic needs, how these same professionals would play out this value in program decisions varies greatly. When is the student's understanding of need comprehensive, appropriate, and/or realistic? When need is determined by groups in the community rather than an individual, does the institution's responsibility and accountability change? How forcefully should college educators be prepared to press their own views regarding the role of education in community revitalization? Although meaningful answers to such questions can only come in dialogue with local constituents, they too are struggling to more strongly assert their educational rights.

The value-based nature of this tension keeps it highly charged. As college professionals probe these matters, they are ultimately voicing concerns that relate to their own sense of professional integrity. As community groups probe these matters, they are ultimately voicing concerns that relate to their own self-determination.

A second tension can be framed as: Who determines the response? In the current milieu of "customer driven" expectations, both the college and the community are constantly struggling with how best to deliver educational programs. To what extent should the client—whether student, business, or community-based organization—determine the structure of a program? How idiosyncratic should college responses become? Is it good stewardship to constantly reconfigure programs to meet unique circumstances, rather than concentrating on more generic responses? What is lost and what is gained when programs move off campus to better respond to community-based needs?

For professionals, answers to these questions ultimately shape the curriculum and touch

intense, discipline-based loyalties. For community-based clients, such questions often seem beside the point, since fitting into someone else's preconceived mold will simply no longer suffice.

A third issue then becomes: What are the core teaching and learning assignments? This tension deals with matters of content and pedagogy, with the overlapping relationships between academic competence and life competence and between classroom learning and real world application. The underlying goal for both the college and community is to develop skills and aptitudes that will renew individuals and, at the same time, sustain public life. But there are always difficult choices to sort through. If, as is often the case in community programming, the first learning assignment leads only to entry level employment and narrow skill development, when and how should the college respond to the broader goal of ensuring life skill competence? Or if, as is increasingly the case, clients are taught at community locations rather than on campus, what is the college's responsibility to create "a college experience" in the new environment?

In other words, although both the college and community want education that empowers, they often describe the associated teaching and learning tasks differently and list different priorities when asked to choose which educational goals come first.

A final tension is inevitable as serving the community further stretches community college resources: who will pay? Taxpayers insist with increasing fervor that they are already paying their fair share. What is needed in virtually all public institutions, they maintain, is greater efficiency, along with the willingness to reallocate existing resources. Community college leaders counter with the view that mission expansiveness, usually undertaken at the community's urging, has already spread their colleges too thin, with each new thrust tending to jeopardize existing core services. Eventually, both college and community must more clearly agree on a core set of priorities. Such a base will make it easier to determine what, in fact, should be covered by "hard money," and what relegated to soft; what should be offered only on a cost recovery basis, and what deliberately promoted as a profit center.

But the broader struggles implicit in who pays are the struggles of establishing mission priorities and of resolving differences in expectations such as those described in this section. As the dialogue continues, the trick will be for both sides of the equation—rather than becoming adversarial—to stay in relationship.

A New Curriculum for Community Development

If both community expectations and the tensions they create are substantially changing the educational terrain for community colleges, what are the skills needed to flesh out this evolving community-based role? As they seek to respond, both as teaching institutions and as community development practitioners, what new skills do these colleges need to perfect? Five clusters are recommended here as elements of a "new curriculum." Some of these skills have, to date, received more attention than others. But all are very much in demand, build on existing community college strengths, and are capable of pushing community colleges further toward the community development side of the continuum.

Grassroots Involvement Skills. A wide array of skills, currently practiced by an increasing number of community organizers, are built on a single fundamental tenet: involve those who are affected by an issue in its solution. Although it sounds simple, building such ownership, especially at the neighborhood level, is a complex task. It requires listening in careful, open ways, identifying and developing leaders in a given setting, and organizing a varied cast of players to the point that they can work together. One example of a strategy which builds these skills is the community forum methodology discussed in this monograph. At its most basic, a community forum builds understanding; at a more ambitious level, it solves problems. Since both these potential outcomes are extremely important to the community, forums are likely to become a seminal methodology

that is used again and again. But it is only one strategy in an arsenal of tools that will be needed to foster the necessary involvement.

Mediation Skills. The easing of intransigent tensions within community life, especially those related to race and class, is a critical community need. Unless some firmer basis for dialogue can be established when volatile issues reach a sticking point, the possibility of achieving the necessary critical mass to work on controversial problems becomes virtually nonexistent. There are proven strategies such as Roger Fisher's win-win negotiation processes to employ in this skill area, strategies which community colleges and other public institutions are beginning to use as they diversify staff and build more consensual forms of governance. But if community colleges are to respond to the mediation needs of external groups, they will in all likelihood be asked not only to teach what they have learned, but to sometimes mediate in volatile situations, particularly when they bring to the negotiation arena an established base of trust with key players.

Collaboration Skills. Because it is such a reasonable methodology to alleviate problems of waste, duplication, and inefficiency, collaboration is currently a highly touted strategy among virtually all segments of community life. Despite such rhetoric, genuine collaboration—sharing both power and resources to solve complex problems—remains rare. Rather, coalitions which tend to be temporary and rely on compromise and maintaining separate identifies are much more the norm. In the future, to bring full-blown reform to such intransigent arenas as public education, or health care, or the criminal justice system, more reciprocal, long-lived relationships will be required. As bridge institutions with a key role to play in many of these problem-solving partnerships, community colleges are likely to be asked to develop, participate in, and teach these fledgling collaborative methodologies.

Systems Skills. Systems skills are closely linked to those of collaboration in that they define both the complex issues and the long-term solutions that collaborative processes seek to implement. David Osborne and Peter Senge have explicated in some detail in recent bestsellers the ways in which the systems undergirding communities and organizations are breaking down, relying as they do on bureaucratic and compartmentalized decision-making structures that no longer fit today's realities. Unless more interdisciplinary solutions can be found that consider the whole and strengthen the processes that connect society, segments that should be part of a comprehensive response to a complex problem will remain isolated from one another in ways that threaten the general good. Because key elements of reinventing these systems—better needs assessment, clear customer focus, an ideological comfort with ambiguity, and interdisciplinary thinking—are skills community colleges have developed to advance their complex mission, they have a role to play in building this framework.

Leadership Skills. Communities will need leaders who can both manage and engender each of the processes described above. Practical matters of dealing with diverse constituencies, building consensus, and solving problems will require new skills, as well as new preparation processes. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation, in particular, has been intent on strengthening these community development skills in leaders and is currently funding several community college projects to develop a framework for this task. But the work they now support is only a starting point. Preparing a new generation of leaders who combine existing community college strengths with new community development skills will surely become a core assignment.

Key Tasks and Natural Strengths

If these elements of a new curriculum are to grow as they should from existing expertise, community colleges have several key tasks to perform and several natural strengths to further enhance.

Their first task is to continually clarify and mediate different internal views of mission and purpose as they respond to community need. A number of strategies can help: creating more

intersection points between credit and noncredit programs; moving off campus with increasing frequency for a variety of programmatic thrusts; replacing advisory committees with more substantive college/community collaborations; integrating current community-based activity more fully into the college culture.

As they amplify community-based responses, a second task is to revise the content and methodology of teaching to more nearly match the medium and the message. In essence, in their community development role, community colleges have drawn a skill-building assignment that will rely less on typical classroom approaches and more on hands-on experiences in real or simulated situations. Further, if they are to practice what they preach, a first requirement for many community college professionals will be that they acquire firsthand, in-depth knowledge of the neighborhoods and constituents to be served which they can then apply to the learning environment.

A third task is to assure that community partners assume their share of the responsibility in building a full-fledged relationship. Realistically, community-based groups can be expected to provide support and/or funding for new programs. They can be asked to recruit students, provide volunteer help, and participate in planning and evaluation. They can be approached to donate space and/or publicity. Cultivating such reciprocity is imperative if the constantly evolving relationship between the college and the community is to sustain itself during the difficult times ahead.

As they work on these key tasks, community colleges must continue to enhance their natural community development strengths. These strengths are not new or difficult to identify, but they are often unacknowledged because they have become such an organic part of college life. Since they are the foundation on which the elements of a new curriculum will be built, they deserve further emphasis and explication.

To begin with, community college resources for building grassroots skills are considerable. Local citizens are elected or appointed to govern these institutions; local advisory committees play key roles in developing and building bridges for the successful implementation of a vast array of vocational/technical programs; local citizens serve on the college's foundation board and raise considerable support for special programs; and community volunteers extend the work of instructors by participating as tutors and aides. In addition, faculty and staff from the college are well connected and play leadership roles in various social, economic, religious, and educational organizations in the community. Through these established activities, the community college has developed a vast and intricate network to enhance grassroots participation.

Similarly, community college faculty and administrators have a noteworthy base of experience in mediation, collaboration, and systems skills. Every class is a laboratory in which instructors must mediate differences among the most diverse group of students ever to participate in higher education. Interdisciplinary and collaborative learning communities prosper in many colleges. Skills in managing systems are well-honed survival tools for instructors who must prepare organized learning experiences for five different classes, often in collaboration with other instructors. When these instructors represent a number of different disciplines and different departments, mediation and collaboration are the order of the day in creating systems for student success.

Outside the classroom, instructors, administrators, support staff, trustees, students, and local citizens are all stakeholders in maintaining and enhancing the community college as an organization that will serve the community effectively and efficiently. The development of new programs; the revision and deletion of existing programs; the continuing development of all staff; the preparation of goals, long-range plans, and budgets; the evaluation of students and staff; the governance of the college; and dozens of other basic tasks call on mediation, collaborative, and systems skills. The community college that has created a healthy, functioning profile in the community through the exer-

cise of these key skills is well positioned to practice them more broadly.

Finally, if the undergirding elements which will ground a new curriculum for community development are well established, it is because several generations of community college leaders have encouraged them. They have choreographed thousands of transactions between the college and community, pushed the organization to take the necessary risks to respond to community concerns, and created a community service role to which both internal and external constituents have rallied. They have maintained a constant dialogue with local groups, overseen a startlingly complex array of program responses, and assured that all these elements have functioned with some degree of harmony under the rubric of the comprehensive mission. They have listened to and mediated concerns among faculty, staff, students, and community members. They have built relationships of trust with community leaders which expedite partnerships and collaboration. These leadership skills are an ideal base from which to rally the enthusiasm and commitment of faculty and staff to increased experimentation in community development.

A Promising Strategy

This essay began with a rehearsal of the truly perplexing problems facing local communities, as well as the suggestion that community colleges have a role to play in resolving these difficulties. As an analysis of this problem-solving journey, it has implicitlty and explicitly suggested that community college practitioners must find new ways to speed the journey. One particularly promising strategy, which is the subject of this monograph, deserves additional mention here.

In AACC's 1987 Truman Lecture, while pondering the local community's inability to find the common good amid a maze of concerns, John Gardner pointed to the community college as an appropriate convener for problem solving. In effect, he nominated the community college as the local institution with the best chance of bringing various, diverse representatives together for serious discussion and consensus-building.

He and many others have enumerated the reasons. As neutral territory with an established value base that honors different perspectives, community colleges are understood to be islands of refuge which promote community renewal above any particular special interest agenda. They are in close proximity to neighborhood problems and are within commuting distance of ninety-five percent of the nation's population. They are accustomed to working jointly with all manner of community groups—seeking in all these relationships to provide an open and rational review of options. They are action oriented, constantly looking toward workable and fair outcomes. They are innovative, welcoming the discussion of true and fresh ideas and encouraging their implementation whenever possible.

As they bring together various constituencies in a forum designed to begin the process of finding common ground, community colleges capitalize on all these institutional strengths. In the process, they promote a strategy which has a reasonable likelihood of broadening understanding and a potential one of breaking decision gridlock. Moreover, when hosted with some regularity, these forums push a cadre of local problem solvers along the community development learning curve—helping them build trust, understand issues, set priorities, and generate a plan of action.

In other words, community forums are a valuable way to build the expertise of both the college and the community. They create a much stronger likelihood that college and community paths are not only complementary, but that they intersect when need be to address fundamental quality-of-life concerns. They are an ideal transitional tool for community development—a strategy powerful enough to serve as a catalyst for the more far-reaching changes so desperately needed to strengthen community life.

Guidelines for Conducting Community Development Forums

The following guidelines were developed by a national advisory committee of community development specialists from ten community colleges representing various regions across the country. They were then field-tested in nine different community colleges, each focusing on a different critical community issue. The evaluations from citizen participants and community college participants in the forums indicate that the guidelines provide significant and useful directions for organizing and conducting community forums. For colleges planning to use these guidelines, they need adapting to the special needs of the college and the community as well as to the limitations and opportunities reflected in the issues to be addressed.

Getting Started: How to Organize People and Program Elements

Selecting and Defining the Issue. How to choose the issue—indeed how to find it—is among the earliest concerns in planning a forum. Often the forum topic possibilities are numerous, even when a general area has been identified (i.e., the health concerns of a community.) Generally, two dynamics push the selection process along: first, an urgent sense of community need and, second, a champion or champions. If these two ingredients are present, then the process becomes a matter of providing focus and definition. One or more discussion group sessions may be organized, representing a cross-section of points of view, to first explore and then hone the most promising issue.

Of course, choosing an issue is neither selecting a general topic or focusing only on a narrowly-defined problem. Issues are typically value-based, reflect divergent points of view, and contain policy-level implications. Before closure can be reached, an appropriate scope for the forum must be determined as well as clear consensus on the goal this community-based activity is seeking to achieve. If carefully approached, selecting and defining the issue can lay the groundwork for the ownership and involvement of planners and likely participants.

Before the process of selecting and defining the issue is concluded, it is useful to have named the forum coordinator so that this person can help in setting the parameters that will affect the entire undertaking. Ideally this person will be involved in the early seminal discussions which frame the issue.

Guidelines. The following guidelines apply to organizing people and program elements:

- Construct the issue to be more than a general topic or a narrowly defined problem.
- Convene a focus group to flesh out one or more possibilities.
- Ensure that the issue taps clear community interest and addresses obvious community need.
- Focus on an issue in which the community college has a stake.
- Ensure the subject is timely and can be supported by enough information to provide a full consideration of the topic.
- Frame the issue to be solution-oriented, creating the likelihood that positive steps will be taken as a result of the event.

- Secure input and acceptance on probable issues from internal constituent groups: president and board; faculty, administrative and support staff leadership; other staff members likely to play a significant role in hosting the event; students, etc.

- Secure input and acceptance from representatives of external groups: those affected by the issues, experts/specialists who have in-depth understanding, as well as a broad spectrum of influential community leaders who represent appropriately diverse backgrounds and points of view.

- Begin to define the issue by considering feasible scope, the availability of human and fiscal resources, and needed data.

- Consider matters of timing and format. Is the issue best dealt with in a day or less, several days, or might there be a series of forums?

- Conclude the definition process by articulating a clear statement of the issue, accompanied by explication of the forum's purpose and/or goals.

- Circulate these elements in writing to appropriate groups for feedback and endorsement.

Selecting a Forum Coordinator. To begin with, the forum coordinator needs to be a person who understands the issue and values the dynamics a forum typically engenders. Practically speaking, the nature of this assignment demands a person who is both task and process oriented—able to follow through on a myriad of details while, at the same time, enlisting and involving others in a positive way. As the foremost champion of the forum, the coordinator needs to possess both authority and influence to lead the undertaking. If an immediate choice is not apparent, then top college leadership, particularly those representing areas likely to be affected, need to confer. Ideally, the choice will be named and/or endorsed by the president. To this extent, authority for the assignment will be conferred, but the ability to exert broader influence is based on the respect and competence assigned the choice.

Because of the demands of the assignment, one option is to consider joint appointments for forum coordinator—representatives from the college and the community, for example, or from faculty and administration. For this approach to be successful, clear delineation of responsibilities must occur.

Guidelines. The following guidelines apply to selecting a forum coordinator:

- Ask the CEO to endorse/empower/announce the appointment of the forum coordinator.

- Provide this person the time and resources to do the work.

- Provide clerical assistance, budget support, and technical assistance.

- Assign the coordinator the authority to spend and raise money, call meetings, delegate assignments, and obtain commitments of time and resources from internal and external groups.

- Ask him/her to schedule/coordinate/facilitate the work of the steering and advisory committees as the central planning groups.

- Emphasize the coordinator's responsibility to communicate regularly with all key internal and external groups—acting as both formal and informal liaison on a broad array of matters. In this communication process, he/she is continually taking the pulse of opinion makers, keeping college leadership informed, and providing context/rationale for the forum while, at the same time, managing logistics.

- Assign this person oversight responsibility of the committee structure which supports the effort and brings it to conclusion.

- Ask the forum coordinator to oversee the initial phase of follow-up to ensure continuity.

- Provide professional development opportunities to increase his/her ability to perform successfully in this role.

Appointing Steering and Advisory Committees. The scope and potential controversy associated with developing and hosting the forum may well dictate whether steering and advisory committees are separate entities or may be merged. For clarity, the two committees will be treated in these guidelines as separate groups. When only one committee is formed, the size needs to be kept manageable—ten or fewer would be optimal.

The steering committee is that group that oversees the comprehensive planning and development of the forum. They are usually a small working group, often with a majority of the membership coming from the college. They meet frequently, especially as the event nears. Their energy and commitment is vital to the forum coordinator and the success of the event.

Typically, the advisory committee is the larger group because it represents broad-based community expertise and interest. It convenes less often and obviously contains more external representatives. It advises regarding such matters as program development, publicity, and resource development. In general, advisory committee members are selected because they have special interest, expertise, and influence to contribute and are willing to use these to help make the forum a success.

The advisory committee's role may be more easily combined with the steering committee's role if the informal network described in the Building Support section is vital and the issue is less complex and/or volatile. The advisory committee is politically useful when an official community-led group is needed to both anticipate problems and help manage controversy.

Guidelines. The following guidelines apply to appointing steering and advisory committees:

The Steering Committee:

- Is chaired by the forum coordinator.

- Convenes four to six months before the forum.

- Is assigned oversight responsibility for planning and developing the forum.

- Has authority to create a committee structure, delegate assignments, and make decisions about hosting the event.

- Develops a master plan with the forum coordinator.

- Provides counsel and advice to the coordinator throughout the development process.

- Supports the coordinator as spokespersons/advocates.

- Represents diversity of perspective and role.

- Represents the varied expertise needed to make the forum a success—i.e., funding, publicity, event planning, technical assistance.

The Advisory Committee:

- Is drawn from pivotal leaders within the informal network, including both internal and external members—although weighted toward external membership.

- Convenes at approximately the same time as the steering committee, four to six months ahead, but meets less frequently

to conform to their less comprehensive responsibilities.

- Is chaired by a college leader or close "friend of the college," with staff support provided by the forum coordinator.

- Represents in its membership diverse interests, background, role, expertise, etc.

- Includes representatives who can provide/enlist funding, publicity, and program expertise.

- Includes likely leaders and facilitators for the forum.

- Publicizes the event to the community.

- Serves as a formal mechanism for alerting college planning groups to potential problems/controversy/concerns within the larger community. Ideally, the advisory committee serves as an early warning system to anticipate and diffuse potential community-based concerns.

Setting the Agenda: Key Event Planning Components

Building a Master Plan and Budget. Throughout the guidelines, various aspects of planning are discussed. In effect, these comprise an ensemble of planning processes. In order for there to be clarity and continuity among these various elements, the forum coordinator and steering committee need to build a master plan which lays out expectations and timelines for resource development, marketing, program development, logistical support, etc. A fundamental aspect of this master plan is building a budget to temper expectations with a solid dose of reality.

Guidelines. The following apply to building a master plan and budget:

- Develop a master plan which lays out tasks over a four- to six-month time frame.

- Ask the steering committee, as one of its first tasks, to develop this plan for the forum.

- Include major components necessary to launch the forum: program development, marketing, resource development, logistical support, etc.

- Consider timeframes, timelines, deadlines, budget needs most carefully.

- Develop six-week to two-month phases of implementation similar to the following:

  Phase 1. staff the project; form the various support groups; develop a master plan; establish the funding base; explore funding options; develop comprehensive program outline; invite prominent program leaders/speakers; begin early processes to market the forum.

  Phase 2. complete program planning; communicate regularly with planners and likely participants; mail out advance program; lay groundwork with the media; garner necessary resource commitments.

  Phase 3. distribute final program materials; initiate advance registration; intensify logistical planning; convene host subcommittees, etc.; intensify marketing efforts; attend to event amenities; host the forum; plan for and accomplish evaluation and follow-up.

- Build a budget which provides financial support for key components of the plan, considering these typical expenses:

  Promotion. Advertising, flyers, and brochures.

  Printing and postage. For above brochures, letters to speakers, support groups, forum agenda, speakers' bios, mailing list rental, signs, ribbons, tickets, evaluation forms, name badges and holders.

  Speaker. Travel, expenses, honorarium, gifts, handout materials.

  Facility. Rental, catering, audio visual, technicians, stage decor, miscellaneous

equipment, photographe, tips, security, press room needs.

Staff expenses. Parking, tips, miscellaneous, temporary help.

Miscellaneous. Day care service, shipping/courier, supplies.

- Assign each member of the steering committee specific responsibilities which may include the chairing of a subcommittee.
- Establish benchmarks or major deadlines as reference points for all planners.
- Communicate major elements of the master plan to all groups.
- Walk through the plan with the advisory committee and key college leaders.
- Assess progress of the plan on at least a monthly basis.

Securing Funds and Resources. Groundwork for resource development has been prepared if the network, steering and advisory committees, and/or cosponsors have become substantively involved in planning. One of the primary functions of these various groups is to offer and/or tap resources within the college and community. Early on, college leadership must determine the degree to which the college can underwrite the forum. This early guidance helps the forum coordinator and steering committee determine how much of their energy needs to be assigned to generating resources. Ideally, if the college can assume most baseline costs, the planners can then approach additional sponsors to underwrite components that will increase impact and lay the groundwork for future forums.

The key on matters of resource development is to have a clear sense of the costs and a thoughtful plan for meeting these. If the costs assumed by the college seem too high to internal groups, the likelihood that such events will be repeated is reduced. Avoid that potential danger.

Guidelines. The following apply to securing funds and resources:

- Ask the coordinator and steering committee to determine likely costs as part of building a master plan.
- Determine early what baseline support the college will provide. Consider these college sources: the president's fund, student activity funds, community college foundation discretionary funds. Consider these strategies: reduced load, overtime, extra service contracts, student and staff volunteers, etc.
- Ask the advisory committee to review or endorse the resource development strategy.
- Consider a registration fee for forum participants as a fall-back strategy.
- Ask cosponsors to contribute some level of revenue or in-kind support.
- Enlist support from corporations, foundations, and/or patrons. Again, this may include in-kind support.
- Enlist the community college foundation/resource development arm to help identify likely funding sources and determine funding approach.
- Consider soliciting a variety of in-kind contributions including meals and/or refreshments, printing and/or publicity, facility use, technology, expertise, etc.

Developing the Program. Program development includes two broad areas: content and logistics. Each program iteration should achieve greater focus, continuity, and involvement in these two areas. The forum coordinator and steering committee oversee logistics while they work closely with network/advisory committee/cosponsors to hone program content. In good part, as the many associations and contacts are developed, they increase the likeli-

hood of program impact and anticipate potential problems. In all of this, "the sooner the better" is a good rule of thumb. Potential audiences are more likely to be interested and make plans to attend if they receive information early.

The pace of the forum is absolutely critical in maintaining interest. There seems to be a natural inclination to too much lecture, too little interaction, too much time given to one or a few spokespersons, etc. The moderator can surely help with the pace, but the format itself is the most powerful tool in controlling tempo.

Guidelines. The following apply to developing the program:

- Follow these broad planning tenets in developing the program: clear constituent representation; issue focus, with clear statement of goals and outcomes; high value on participation, ensuring that participants have various ways to interact with each other and the issue; variety in program format to hold interest and increase the likelihood of reaching various participant segments; evaluation designed to facilitate follow-up.

- Ensure that these constraining factors have been carefully considered: time and available space, likely audience, media/technology available, potential controversy.

- Encourage creativity, especially in the early stages of developing the program, giving planners ample brainstorming opportunities.

- Choose the forum date carefully, considering the following: holidays, conflicting college activities, community events, faculty responsibilities, teaching schedules, days of the week, travel restrictions, availability of facilities, etc.

- Consider the following elements in picking a location for the forum: What is the capacity of the facility? Are food services available? Will one auditorium be sufficient or is break-out space for small group activity also required? Is any other space required? What is the available college space? The available community space? What are their costs? Will hotel accommodations be required? How many? At what rate? What is the hotel's proximity to the workshop site? What transportation is available between the two locations?

- Consider the following possible formats:

  Town meeting. Use a moderator to direct question and answer sessions.

  Small group discussion. Led by trained facilitators. With participants provided clearly-defined tasks; panel discussion—with panelists offering appropriately diverse expert opinion.

  Keynote. As a way to bring an audience with uneven knowledge up to speed.

  Point/counterpoint dialogue. Dramatic presentation. Episodes, scenes, one-act plays which frame the issue.

  Case studies. To increase dialogue and discussion.

  Surveys. To poll opinion and provide feedback, possibly during the event (See Appendix).

  Wrap-up. Asking a credible participant to analyze, synthesize, and make recommendations.

  Informal times to mingle. Carefully structured into the event, often in conjunction with food/refreshments.

  Forum series. For complex issues.

- Treat the moderator(s)/facilitator(s) as key to the program's success.

- Give careful consideration both to their credibility and skills—looking for facilitation, negotiation, listening, and communication skills.

- Document the event in appropriate ways, including the use of video/audio record-

ing, note takers, observers, reports of small group discussions, etc.

- Ensure that participants have an opportunity to evaluate and offer comment on what the next steps should be.

Building Support: How to Develop External and Internal Audiences

Building a Network. Over time various relationships need to be built with an array of supporters who can contribute to the success of the forum. A network is a fairly informal or loose configuration of these prospects which has an important role to play in making the forum a success. Networks can be used to spread the word, offer feedback, and develop and participate in the program. They often form the nucleus of the audience. They are supporters who need to be kept "in the know" through frequent communication.

Each network will assume a unique identity, but if well formed and informed, can continue to be a resource during future projects.

Guidelines. The following apply to building a network:

- Involve those affected by the issue, ensuring that the network represents different points of view, varied demography, and appropriate levels and segments of community life.

- Identify and inform key influence-shapers and high visibility members of the community to add visibility and credibility to the undertaking.

- Consider the value of forming liaisons, not only at local level, but at state and national levels.

- Tap into the existing networks of community-based organizations, political entities, educational institutions, businesses, churches, etc.

- Conduct research to identify potential network members.

- Foster openness by offering affiliation to all those interested in or responsive to the topic.

- Communicate in frequent and timely ways with the network.

- Identify and begin to make contact with likely media resources.

- Develop mailing lists and circulate descriptive program information, concept papers, newsletters, etc.

- Enlist community college staff and students as advocates.

- Rely on telephone or face-to-face contact with key network members to clearly read the pulse of local constituent groups.

- Ask the leadership of the college, including the board of trustees and the foundation board, to become forum advocates.

- Use existing publications at the college and in the community to update interested parties.

Identifying and Inviting Cosponsors. Cosponsors provide yet another mechanism for securing support and involvement, expanding influence and resources, and/or helping to diffuse controversy. Although expectations for cosponsors may vary, it is important to clearly establish these parameters and communicate expectations.

Some potential cosponsors may tend to insert an unnecessarily negative or volatile point of view into the planning mix. Since the forum is intended to point toward possible common ground, it is important to minimize this possibility. Achieving balance between controversy and fair representation is one of the delicate aspects of organizing a successful forum.

Guidelines. The following apply to identifying and inviting cosponsors:

- Ask the forum coordinator and steering committee to set the parameters for cosponsorship in consultation with college leadership.
- Review the list of potential cosponsors with the advisory committee.
- Develop agreements carefully with cosponsors, clearly specifying expectations.
- Set up systems that will support these expectations and make it easy for cosponsors to feel appropriately involved.
- Cosponsor with organizations that can help with such areas as publicity, program development, and resource development.
- Cosponsor with organizations that represent diverse points of view.
- See that cosponsors are appropriately/accurately recognized in preforum publicity and at the event itself.

Involving Community College Leadership, Faculty, Staff, and Students. The quality of involvement of the college family will facilitate not only the success of this one event, but will increase/decrease the likelihood that future forums will be undertaken. The forum can be a key educational event for the college, providing opportunities for class-related activities, curriculum and program review, and student involvement. Early planning decisions will need to set parameters for a desirable level of participation by the college. Various college segments can usefully be involved, not only in the event itself, but in the myriad of activities leading to and following up on the forum. Since students not only represent the community in important ways, but are the focal point of college life, their involvement should not be underestimated.

There is a healthy balance to be found in the proportion of college and community members who participate. Achieving this equilibrium is a matter for the steering and advisory committees to carefully evaluate, especially if space is limited.

Guidelines. The following apply to involving community college leadership, faculty, staff, and students:

- Begin involving the college community early.
- Consider the appropriate level of college participation, taking into account such constraining factors as available space.
- Communicate on a regular basis with the college community regarding the forum.
- Find ways to demonstrate the college CEO's support of the event, including asking him/her to be an ongoing spokesperson for the effort.
- Involve influential staff in both formal and informal roles.
- Involve college personnel and students who have specific interests/expertise to offer.
- Consider ways in which college curriculum, courses, and priorities complement the issue.
- Identify students who can be involved, including: honors groups (Phi Theta Kappa); student government; service clubs; campus ministries; scholarship recipients.
- Consider these and other possible strategies for involving students: focus groups to explore the issue; preparation of promotional materials; a community service

project; program participants—facilitators, panelists, hosts, recorders.

- Assure that associations/senates/union groups are informed and included as appropriate throughout the process.
- Enlist faculty involvement using department/division structures whenever possible.
- Inform college administrators and support staff early in the process and enlist their help.
- Involve the board of trustees, foundation board, and college advisory committees as appropriate.
- Achieve a balance of representation among college groups.
- Match program needs to staff expertise, i.e., counselors as group facilitators, political scientists as issue framers, etc.
- Capitalize on the relationships college staff have with the external community.
- Provide brief written updates for use at department/division/staff meetings.
- Assure that all those who will be asked to support the event are informed and/or involved well beforehand.

Promoting the Event: How to Market the Forum

Publicizing the Event. Publicizing the forum requires taking advantage of established networks and planning structures in both the college and community. Key marketing strategies and timelines need to be established in the master plan which consider internal and external needs. Overall, two elements are key: the image that the publicity creates and its timely diffusion.

The issue-based focus of the forum, especially when there is a strong element of controversy, will be likely to peak media interest and attract broad-based participation. Although there is a constructive balance to be found when dealing with controversy, some difference of opinion tends to generate interest.

Guidelines. The following apply to publicizing the event:

- Devise a marketing strategy which indicates clear phases, targets specific markets, and is cost effective.
- Involve the college public relations director early. At minimum, use this person as a consultant and capitalize on his/her media contacts.
- Appoint persons with relevant expertise in marketing to steering and/or advisory committees.
- Consider forming a publicity subcommittee as an arm of the steering committee.
- Take advantage of existing publicity mechanisms.
- Use technology to routinize/expedite public relations processes—computerized mailing lists, FAXes, RSVPs, etc.
- Find the "hook" for particular audiences.
- Consider constituent representation carefully.
- Secure early commitments to participate whenever possible.
- Ask the advisory committee to assume key marketing assignments.
- Emphasize the importance of word-of-mouth promotion.

- Develop a specific strategy for working with the media.
- Consider hosting a press conference.
- Consider these additional promotion possibilities: a series of issue-related articles or features; interviews with experts/planners on the issue; public service announcements; appearances on interview/talk shows; press releases; photo opportunities; media cosponsorship; use of a media personality to moderate; cable programming options, including start-to-finish event coverage.
- Consider these additional general promotion strategies: internal and external newsletters; mailing inserts; a hotline; electronic mail; inclusion on event calendars; endorsements by influential groups/individuals; program description mailings, with RSVP; early registration incentives; surveys related to the issue; circulation of concept papers or case studies; special roles for other educational institutions; "famous" program presenters; a student contest to design program, logo, posters.

Developing Print Materials. Much of the content of print materials will be hammered out by planners as the process moves along. But in sharing this information with various internal and external publics, it is important to develop materials that are consistent, professional in appearance, and well written. It is also important that the distribution of these materials be handled in an efficient and effective manner. For example, key deadlines for dissemination need to be flagged in the master plan to ensure that communication is provided on a regular and timely basis. Such processes will build momentum for the event.

Guidelines. The following apply to developing print materials:

- Develop and use a forum logo/masthead design on all distributed materials to establish a consistent image.
- Stipulate that the forum coordinator or his/her designee is the quality control point for materials which are distributed.
- Develop computerized mailing lists.
- Target particular market segments.
- Ask a single person to write all widely-distributed pieces to ensure a consistent style, point of view, and focus.
- Use desktop publishing.
- Ensure accurate credits for those who are playing various host roles.
- Develop materials which are appealing, readable, jargon free, and succinct.
- Have materials proofread by several individuals.
- Consider the following communication formats: brochures; posters; registration packets; handout materials; concept papers; case studies; advertisements (paid or free); press kits; advance programs; event programs; media packet.

Hosting the Event: How to Ensure Smooth Implementation

Coordinating Logistics. Logistical planning is ongoing throughout the process of developing and hosting the forum. However, as the event nears, logistical concerns will consume more time and energy and will need careful attention. The forum coordinator and steering committee take the lead in orchestrating these processes. In effect, during the final weeks of planning, the steering committee becomes a host committee for the event. They will need to plan carefully and enlist additional help from volunteers who can give time and atten-

tion to the myriad of details that are involved. In these logistical matters, it makes sense to rely heavily on college personnel.

One of the most productive strategies for assuring a smooth-running event is to have run-throughs/rehearsals—when microphones, lighting, and equipment are tested and back-up plans are crystallized. It is also useful to have a coaching session for those playing various host roles. Although much information can be shared ahead of time, it is always useful to have face-to-face encounters so that questions can be asked and concerns resolved.

Guidelines. The following apply to coordinating logistics:

- Give the coordinator and steering committee the authority and resources to take on various aspects of logistical planning.
- Assign various categories of responsibility to steering committee members who may then form subcommittees to carry out these tasks.
- Use the steering committee as a "think tank" to anticipate needs, strategize responses, and develop back-up systems. Ask, for example, that the group consider how to address weather-related variables, last-minute sickness of program leaders, security concerns, etc.
- Begin nailing down logistical components early.
- Develop an early warning system to alert the steering committee when plans break down and/or deadlines are not met.
- Expect the steering committee to oversee the work of various subgroups. Since there will be inevitable overlap in assigned duties, coordination becomes crucial.
- Develop processes for informing and welcoming presenters.
- Advise speakers of media coverage.
- Plan food events carefully considering menu selection, dietary needs of special groups, staff support, etc.
- Give careful consideration to the configuration of small groups. Random assignments versus representational assignments will require different strategies and different degrees of logistical support.
- Enlist and train hosts—students, staff, committee members—to welcome, respond to questions, give directions, etc.
- Have technical assistance on hand to respond to any problems with the use of equipment/technology.
- Devise a timekeeping strategy to keep the program on schedule.
- Plan to test, rehearse, check all systems before the event.
- Consider these as possible subcommittees: registration, program, meeting logistics, media.
- Give clear direction to each needed subcommittee—spelling out responsibilities, sharing the master plan, alerting to critical deadlines, providing resources, etc.
- Consider these elements in the four suggested subcommittee arenas:

  Registration. Advance registration; a confirmation process for advance registration; on-site registration; a clearly defined RSVP process; a process for late registration; a clear fee structure; registration desk; trained registration staff; registration packets; name tags; careful record keeping; use of computers at on-site registration; a coordinator to problem-solve, answer questions, etc.

  Program. Early and on-site distribu-

tion of the forum program; advance materials sent to program presenters/facilitators; duplicate materials on hand at the forum; confirmation letters spelling out responsibilities, schedules, etc.; process for audiovisual requests and delivery; small group configuration and coding; process for recording/summarizing various program components; evaluation of program; follow-up of program; introduction of presenters; hosts for presenters; travel, lodging, and honorarium/gift processes for presenters.

Meeting Logistics. Parking; handicap access; day care; space needs; climate control; sound systems; lighting systems; room arrangements; seating arrangements; head table; podium arrangements; stage decor (flags, flowers, banners, etc.); security systems; water stations; break set-ups and refreshments; host(s) to welcome, direct traffic, answer questions, etc.; transporting and directing participants; smoking policy; lunch reception; VIP treatment; available telephone/FAX/copy machine; clerical support; computer support; audiovisual set-up; readable signage.

Media. Press kits; media room; telephone/typewriter/FAX access; media liaisons; interview opportunities; photo opportunities.

Training Moderators and Facilitators. Ideally, the forum will include a great deal of discussion/conversation about the issue—with structures which encourage this interaction formatted throughout the event. One or more moderators will be needed, if there is a large group discussion—i.e., a town meeting, a question-and-answer session after a panel discussion, etc. Facilitators will be needed to run small group sessions. The intent in training/briefing moderators and facilitators is to ensure that there is consistency in approach and a common base of expectations and understanding.

Guidelines. The following apply to training moderators and facilitators:

- Ensure diversity of representation among these program leaders.
- Enlist help from the college and the community.
- Ask the steering committee to establish guidelines for selecting moderators/facilitators which clearly delineate the needed roles and skills.
- Ask the advisory committee to review these guidelines and to suggest candidates.
- Indicate that participation in a training/briefing session is part of the facilitation assignment.
- Circulate materials ahead of time which provide information about the issue, discuss purpose and goals, and lay out specific roles and responsibilities.
- Schedule a training session close to the event.
- Select moderator(s) with great care since they will assume a critical role in directing the discussions of the forum.
- Consider this partial listing of skills/attributes needed by the *moderator*: verbal skills; excellent listening skills; humor; mediation/conflict resolution skills; knowledge of topic; credibility; ability to gatekeep; a balance between tough-mindedness and fairness.
- Consider the possibility of alternating moderators during the event. Such an approach lessens the burden on any one person and enables planners to make a statement about the value of diverse representation.
- Select facilitators who have good verbal and listening skills, and who can lead a small group discussion on the issue.

Providing Closure: Building Processes for Future Forums

Evaluating the Forum. Evaluation becomes a key component of the forum for two reasons: (1) the likelihood that the college will want to host other forums and (2) the clear link between evaluation and successful follow-up. Evaluation will need to include representative perspectives and seek to assess effectiveness from several different vantages, primarily by telling planners how well they have framed the issue and achieved the forum's purpose.

One special concern, when an event such as a community forum does not stay on schedule, often the element that is short-changed is evaluation—it is easy to leave too little time, plan to do it later, and/or ask for evaluation after many of the participants have left. If these tendencies can be avoided, the likelihood that evaluation will be clearly tied to follow-up greatly increases.

Guidelines. The following apply to evaluating the forum:

- Ask the steering committee to give careful consideration to the evaluation component of the forum.
- Keep evaluation clearly tied to the purpose/goals of the forum.
- Assign a person to oversee evaluation.
- Assure that respondents include diverse constituent groups.
- Use college or community research expertise to help design the evaluation, considering appropriate protocols/survey techniques, etc.
- Keep evaluation formats simple, jargon-free, grounded in practicality, etc.
- Consider the use of technology in the evaluation process (See Appendix).
- Consider how the evaluation can complement and advance existing knowledge of the issue.
- Provide participants a summary of the evaluation.
- Consider measuring these elements: participant demography, participant views and shifts in views, analysis of the program and formats, assessment of logistics.
- Ask participants for follow-up recommendations, i.e., "Where do we go from here?".
- Select approaches appropriate to needs: questionnaires, surveys (scantron technologies), student observers, expert observers, small group discussion, staff evaluation, informal interviews.

Following Up to Ensure Action. There are two kinds of follow-up to consider—follow-up as hosts of the event and follow-up to ensure action on the issue. Though important, the first is fairly straightforward. The second, which is much more demanding, is often short-changed in the press of established routines. Thus, the systems which are put in place during planning become critical to ensuring successful long-term follow-up.

Since community forums often come in clusters, evaluation and follow-up help to ensure that such an event becomes a catalytic mechanism for creating positive change.

Guidelines. The following apply to the follow-up to ensure action:

- Ask the steering committee to assume the first phase of follow-up.
- Assure that appropriate groups and individuals have been thanked, reports have been written, evaluations summarized and shared, borrowed items returned—whatever protocol demands for a smooth and

gracious conclusion to the event.

- Give careful consideration to follow-up recommendations generated at the forum.
- Ask the steering committee to develop follow-up criteria, measures, timelines, etc.
- Inform members of the advisory committee and solicit their involvement as appropriate.
- Assure that any new players in the follow-up phase understand the overall context.
- Consider ways follow-up action can be tied to existing programs, both at the college and in the community.
- Identify champions to spearhead various components of follow-up.
- Be alert to unexpected spin offs.
- Consider ways in which volunteers/ organizations can contribute to follow-up.
- Use established forum communication mechanisms to report on next steps.
- Involve students.
- Consider ways follow-up may be linked to future forums.
- Utilize the forum's network of advocates to help with follow-up.
- Consider establishing benchmarks—six months, one year, etc.—for reconvening steering/advisory committees to review progress.

Community Forum
Case Studies

The following nine case studies, although brief, give a flavor of the forums hosted by the colleges participating in the Hitachi project. They provide some brief information about the issues that were addressed, and more analysis and comment about the process of hosting the forum. The final section of each case study encapsulates this learning in a list of key recommendations which represent the best advice each college can offer as a result of having gone through the process.

Since forum coordinators were able to confer with each other during the planning process, a resource they found useful, they are extending the same opportunity to readers who may use these guidelines. The name and address of a contact person is listed in the summary information for each case study. Although a review of these reports clearly shows that the mechanisms associated with hosting an event varied from college to college, several process issues are mentioned with enough frequency to deserve special mention:

- the difficulty of focusing the topic;
- the special effort required to build the necessary support both in the community and at the college;
- the tendency to underestimate the amount of work involved in hosting the event;
- the difficulty in reaching closure, sometimes creating the feeling at the conclusion of the forum that "nothing was solved";
- the corollary difficulty created by lack of closure in designing appropriate follow-up action.

In spite of concerns such as these, these colleges, without exception, report that their forums helped their local communities confront wide-ranging, sometimes controversial topics, increase their understanding of these issues, and create at least the beginnings of a framework for problem solving. Equally important, it is clear that host colleges were perceived to be appropriate convenors and catalysts for such community-building undertakings. They were able to bring the necessary players to the table and create a safe environment in which the risky business of conferral could begin. This success bodes well for the future of community forums and suggests that the convening function can become a key strategy in community development.

Health Care in Crisis: Community Forums for Citizens' Input

Santa Fe Community College

Chester Leathers and Judy Skelton

Executive Summary

Santa Fe Community College in Gainesville, Florida, sponsored a series of five forums on issues in health care entitled, "Health Care in Crisis: Community Forums for Citizens' Input." The subtitles were "Rationing Health Care by Age: Now and in the Future," "Rationing Health Care: Rural vs. Urban," "Paying for Health Care: Now and in the Future," "Reforming the Health Care System," and "Citizens' Choices for Action on Health Care." The forums, cosponsored by the school board of Alachua County and The Gainesville Sun newspaper, were all held in October 1992, at different locations and times to accommodate as many diverse audiences as possible. Total attendance for the five forums was 173; the average number in attendance for each of the five forums was thirty-four. The make-up of the audiences for all of the forums was similar—generally one-half health care providers, one-fourth students, and one-fourth citizens.

The goals of the forums were to provide information about each of the issues from local and national perspectives; to initiate a dialogue among the various interest groups; and to report opinions and choices to policy makers. All of the primary goals were achieved, and several indirect or secondary outcomes were reported to the members of the steering committee and college staff. In addition, members of the state's health planning agency attended, videotaped, and used information presented in the forums to support health care initiatives with members of state legislative bodies.

For further information, inquiries may be directed to Chester Leathers, Community Education, Santa Fe Community College, 3000 N.W. 83rd Street, Gainesville, FL 32606 or Judy Skelton, Health Related Programs, Santa Fe Community College, 3000 N.W. 83rd Street, Gainesville, FL 32606.

Issue Overview

One of the largest industries in the United States, the health care industry, is in a state of crisis. Since the problems are enormous and complex, governmental agencies, businesses, and individuals are all seeking to find solutions and make changes in the system. Florida faces unique problems because of its demographics, especially the rapid growth of its older adult sector. Since it is estimated that two thirds of an individual's total lifetime health care expenses are incurred in the last three months of life, supporting a large proportion of senior adults creates significant resource demands. The governor and the legislators in Florida have launched an effort to solve some of these problems.

Gainesville and the surrounding region also have unique health care interests. The area is home to four major comprehensive hospitals and a large medical teaching facility. These institutions employ and serve a sizeable segment of the population in both city and rural communities. The issues of health care are of great importance to the hospitals, providers, insurers, and consumers in the area.

The goals of the forum were to provide information and a framework for public discussion on rationing of health care; to stimulate conversations about which actions or solutions best serve both the needs of the individual, the health care industry, and society at large; and to encourage community-based initiatives to identify, examine, and support potential solutions to the problems of access to and cost for health

care. More specifically, it was hoped the forums would help participants to accomplish the following:

- identify the range of realistic health care alternatives and move toward a choice;
- make a good case for more than one position and consider choices on health care not considered before;
- understand others have reasons for their choices that are not stupid, unreasonable, or immoral;
- realize one's own knowledge is not complete without an understanding of why others feel as they do about the choices;
- consider the underlying values of each choice;
- leave the forum thinking about the choices.

Event Summary

Because of the enormity and complexity of the issues in the health care crisis, the planners decided to develop a series of forums, each with a different focus, but all with some commonalities. The format for the first four forums was the same. Each began with a moderator introducing the topic, a keynote speaker, and a panel; the moderators were all well-known community leaders who did not have any direct connection to the health care industry. The keynote speaker summarized the main issues in the subject area for ten minutes, and the panelists shared individual perspectives for five minutes each. After a brief question and answer period between the audience and speakers, small discussion groups were then formed, and facilitators led each group to develop priorities.

Each forum was held in a different location in the college's service area of Alachua and Bradford Counties. Three were in area high schools and two were in Santa Fe Community College facilities. The times and days were also staggered with one session held on a Saturday morning (9:00-1:00), one on a Friday afternoon (1:00-5:00), and three on week-day evenings (6:00-10:00).

At the first forum, "Rationing Health Care by Age: Now and in the Future," the keynote speaker developed a timeline describing health care requirements from prenatal needs to death. The panel of experts explained the services and mechanisms for obtaining them that are available now, as well as their reaction to the current system. The small groups were asked to prioritize a list of ten health care services as if rationing were going to occur.

The keynote speaker for the second forum, "Rationing Health Care: Rural vs. Urban," addressed the following question: how and why does geography make a difference in the allocation of health resources? All of the panelists served a rural population and/or lived in a rural community. They were asked to describe how working and living in a rural area affects the delivery of health care services. As with the first forum, the small groups were asked to prioritize a listing of ten health care services as if rationing were going to occur.

The third forum, "Paying for Health Care: Now and in the Future," began with the keynote speaker describing the mechanisms of finance in the current system and explaining how much is currently being spent on health care in what areas. He also presented a summary of the initiatives underway in Florida. The panelists described their personal experiences in purchasing or paying for health care. Again, the small groups prioritized a listing of ten health care services.

The fourth of the issue-focused forums, "Reforming the Health Care System," provided information on the structure of the current system. The keynote speaker presented information about the number of people without insurance, the effects of no or inadequate insurance, and the rising cost of health care. The panelists then described alternative health care delivery systems and their possible incentives. A different small group task was given to the small groups. In this case, they were asked to

discuss and vote on one of three health care systems proposed nationally.

The fifth and final forum was designed as a summary and report session. The project coordinator presented summaries from each of the previous four forums to a panel of local legislators and policy makers. Each of the panelists was given an opportunity to respond to the summaries, and the audience had an opportunity to question or make comments on specific issues and concerns.

Without exception, the keynote speakers and panelists at each forum were outstanding. They provided appropriate and pertinent information which brought those in attendance to a basic, common focus on the issue presented. Audience questions and comments were quite lively, with the moderators playing a significant role in "keeping the show moving." The small group activities received the most positive comments; however, there was never enough time according to the participants. Each group did make brief reports on their priorities to the full group; more large group discussions then ensued until time ran out.

Overall the forums achieved their stated goals, although attendance was relatively low. The majority of the written evaluations from participants on forum topics, format, and facilities were all high. The planners, speakers, and facilitators also provided positive feedback on the events. However, attendance suffered for at least two reasons: the issue was too big and the solution too far out of reach for the local community; the community had so many events going on in the fall that attending one more meeting on a large, complex issue was not a high priority.

Beyond the primary outcomes of the individual forums, there were several secondary outcomes. More people than those in direct attendance were affected due to the outstanding media coverage. Local legislators gained some insight into the interests of citizens, and state level planners were able to use information produced by the forums to support state initiatives .

This mixture of primary and secondary outcomes has left some questions about the success of a public forum format. It seems that low attendance may be the most difficult obstacle to overcome, and this may depend on selecting issues carefully. No specific follow-up steps have been identified because of measures undertaken at the state level and in Washington. The impact of these policy changes are as of yet unknown, and local initiatives are impractical at this time.

Guidelines Feedback

Getting Started. Selecting and defining the mission and goals of the forum was the most difficult task. The topic was relevant and timely, but too big. The solutions were not within the local community's power to solve, and there was not clear community need. Leadership for the forum was shared by the director of community education and a full-time faculty member in a health-related field and met the dual need for an experienced convenor and for a specialist with deeper understanding of the issue. Additionally, having two coordinators expanded both the time and resources that could be made available. Planners underestimated time commitments and clerical requirements of the project. Selecting and working with the steering and advisory committees were the easiest part of getting started. The community has an abundance of committed and involved leaders.

Setting the Agenda. Establishing a master plan and budget for the forums was relatively simple because of the college's well-established community resource network. Facilities, equipment, speakers, and publicity were easily organized under the community education umbrella. The tasks of identifying and getting commitments for speakers and small group facilitators for five forums were not difficult, only time consuming. The format of speakers, questions and answers, small groups, and more discussion was highly successful. Outside funding was not required.

Building Support. Building a network for communicating information about the forum seemed to be an easy task, but in retrospect

there was a need for more direct individual-to-individual communication. Cosponsorship was established very early with the local newspaper, and the county school system was already in a joint community education venture with the college. The primary role for these groups was clearly defined as publicity and facility utilization, respectively. Involvement of the college leadership and public information office was excellent; faculty involvement was marginally successful; and student involvement was minimal. Timing of the forums in the very busy fall semester was identified as a major factor contributing to these deficits.

Promoting the Event. A publicity subcommittee developed and implemented a masterplan and timeline for advertising the forums. Low attendance gave evidence that traditional promotional activities were not adequate, and more creative and intense efforts were needed to increase participation.

Hosting the Event. Coordinating the logistics for the five forums was greatly facilitated by on-site coordinators. Subcommittees for refreshments, small group facilitators, and registrars handled all the other details successfully.

Providing Closure. Evaluation forms were developed with a Likert scale to obtain information about the topics, format, and facilities. They were completed by more than ninety-five percent of the participants; the majority of the comments were positive. Summaries of the first four forums were presented at the fifth forum, and summaries of all of the forums were published in the newspaper and broadcast on radio and television stations following each session.

Follow-up as hosts of the event has been completed; however, follow-up to ensure action on the issue is likely to be minimal. There is little action which can be taken locally at this time. The state and federal governments are in the process of making sweeping changes to the health care system, and local action does not seem practical at this time.

Key Recommendations

1. When selecting the issue, narrow the scope to a very specific, relevant, and manageable problem that is solvable in the foreseeable future.

2. Consider taking the forum to already existing groups, i.e., get the program on the agenda of an interested group. Squeezing one more thing into busy schedules is difficult and dramatically affects attendance.

3. Give serious consideration to the time of year and try to schedule the forum when there is less going on in the community. For example, do not schedule it during football season in a college town.

4. Establish (and pay) clerical support specifically for the work of the committee.

5. Develop a strong positive relationship with all of the media in the region; include them as members on the steering committee; and elicit their assistance in forum publicity before and after the event.

Facing the Challenge Together: Creating Economic Transition in the Pacific Northwest

Lane Community College

Jerome Garger

Executive Summary

"Facing the Challenge Together: Creating Economic Transition in the Pacific Northwest," was hosted by Lane Community College (LCC) in Eugene, Oregon, on May 2, 1992. Convened at the performing arts building on the main campus, the community forum was attended by more than 120 participants. Only ten percent of the attendees were affiliated with the college, with the greater majority representing a wide variety of organizations and individuals in the Eugene-Springfield community and outlying rural areas. Forum coordinators Jerome Garger and Dennis Gilbert directed an eight-month planning process that culminated in a forum that was largely successful in reaching its goals. Further inquiries may be made of Jerome Garger, Department of English, Lane Community College, Eugene, OR 97405.

Issue Overview

The Pacific Northwest has suffered the effects of decades of overharvesting of public and private timberlands to the point that the biological sustainability of the ancient forests and the survival of endangered species is being threatened. Short-sighted management policies, top-level Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management decisions, market forces, automation, log exports from both public and private lands, the politicization of the issue, and a general lack of concern for dislocated workers and affected communities have led to an economic and social crisis in British Columbia, Northern California, Washington, Oregon, and other western states. In Oregon alone, since 1990 more than sixty wood products mills have been closed with devastating effects on the personal lives of workers and with far-reaching ripple effects on the economic, social, educational, and governmental systems of urban and particularly of small rural communities.

Timber-industry representatives and most local and national politicians in the Northwest have exacerbated the already volatile situation by reducing the complexity of the issue to simplistic "jobs vs. owls" slogans and "Oregon will never grow out of trees" television ads. While some environmentalists have also oversimplified the problem, most of these organizations have attempted to broaden the discussion.

In 1990, Lane Community College had taken the political risk of assuming a leadership role in this seemingly no-win controversy by sponsoring a forum entitled, "Striving for Unity: Economic Transition Programs for Workers and Communities in the Timber Crisis." Because Lane County is a logging and wood products center in Oregon and because LCC has a reputation as a trustworthy and fair party in the community, the college was an appropriate host. Moreover, LCC's dislocated worker program has retrained hundreds of loggers and wood products workers for jobs in dozens of trades and professions.

This first forum was cosponsored by thirty-six local and regional groups of widely differing viewpoints, philosophies, and concerns. It broke new ground, not only by bringing together the entire spectrum of opinion, but by encouraging unity for the benefit of the entire region. The gathering provided a comprehensive look at the key issues in a three-part format: the current situation, the alternatives, and the strategic outlook. Its goal—to build cooperation and understanding among diverse participants—was, despite predictions to the contrary, largely achieved.

This initial forum both planted the seed and established the tone and format for LCC's "Facing the Challenge Together" follow-up forum in the spring of 1992. In the intervening seventeen months, however, many changes had occurred. Chief among them was a growing national awareness of ancient forest issues, as evidenced by the following:

- the convening of Interior Secretary Manual Lujan's Endangered Species Committee;
- the attempts to circumvent environmental laws by Vice President Quayle's committee on competitiveness;
- the efforts of Senator Bob Packwood (R-Oregon) to gut the Endangered Species Act and, as a result, the hardening of positions by some environmental organizations;
- the passage of property tax limitation in Oregon that further weakened the ability of social, educational, and economic systems to counteract the effects of economic dislocation;
- the timber industry's sponsorship of a series of conferences similar to LCC's original forum, but marked by a strong pro-industry slant.

These and other factors tended to limit the success of LCC's second timber-issues forum. The goals for this follow-up event were to build on the strengths and diversity of the previous conference, discuss in specific detail the kinds of economic transition needed, feature the experiences of former wood products workers and spouses enrolled at LCC, build the broad political unity that could make a difference, and develop increased capacity for college-community cooperation to aid in solving present and future local problems.

Event Summary

The day-long conference was organized to focus on two aspects of economic transition and to answer, in each case, a concomitant set of questions:

- ***Transition for workers and families.*** Who and how are the people affected? What is the range of transition intervention and help? What kind of transitions do people and families need and deserve?
- ***Transition for Communities and Economies.*** What can be done to help communities survive, adapt, and prosper? How can they encourage economic vitality and sustainable production? What are the possibilities, and what do these communities need and deserve?

After registration ($7, $5 for students and seniors, fee waived for unemployed) and a light breakfast, LCC President Jerry Moskus set a positive tone in his welcoming address by urging the more than 100 participants not to be limited by past animosities. His talk was followed by a panel of former timber and wood products workers representing the more than 800 students currently enrolled in LCC's Dislocated Worker Program. The dislocated workers described in detail their loss of the American Dream, the financial and psychological effects of this loss, and the ways in which they had learned to adapt to these harsh realities.

After questions and a spirited discussion, other morning presentations included an update of current state and federal programs by Patti Lake, department chair of Training and Development at LCC, and an eye-opening review of progressive, socially-responsible labor force development programs in Western Europe by Lee Schore, executive director of the Center for Working Life.

These presentations were followed by a choice for participants of six small-group discussion workshops on topics such as intervention before layoffs occur, training/education

programs, apprenticeship programs for forest restoration, worker/family support, and non-governmental community aid. These small group discussions were the high point for many participants. While there was risk in bringing people face-to-face who held strongly conflicting opinions, the discussions provided the most positive outcomes of the conference.

After a buffet lunch, Tony Mazzocci, presidential assistant for the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers International Union, AFL-CIO, delivered an informative and inspiring keynote address. Urging the audience to be bold in raising the level of expectations, Mazzocci established the need for socially progressive legislation, issued a call for a superfund to re-educate displaced workers, and provided a hopeful, realistic vision of workers and environmentalists joining forces around economic transition issues. The afternoon panels which followed featured a summary of state initiatives on funding retraining programs and a positive analysis of the employment potential of forest and watershed restoration programs. Afternoon small-group workshops zeroed in on topics such as rural community options, watershed restoration, responsible enterprise capitalism, expansion of the value-added forest products industry, and factors that create family-wage employment.

The open-mike summation of the conference emphasized the importance of a clear vision and sense of direction to create a coalition of workers and environmentalists that could bring badly needed economic and political change.

In short, in the midst of much polarization, the conference participants, including the twenty or so who filtered in as the day progressed, were provided speakers with local, national, and international expertise who identified practical ways out of an economic disaster. Their presentations and the resulting discussions combined to offer comprehensive solutions that could both preserve a healthy forest ecosystem and maintain a sound forest products base.

Guidelines Feedback

Getting Started. Defining the issue was not a problem. President Jerry Moskus, Assistant to the President Marie Matsen, Vice President of Community and Economic Development Larry Warford, Chair of Training and Development (Dislocated Worker Programs) Patti Lake, forum coordinator Dennis Gilbert, and Jerome Garger met in late September to formulate the plans for the follow-up conference. The early problem was how to keep together the fragile coalition formed at the first forum. Changes beyond LCC's control were occurring in the timber industry, the environmental community, and the political arena that threatened its viability.

Marie Matsen, Patti Lake, Dennis Gilbert, and Jerome Garger comprised the steering committee and frequently discussed progress with President Moskus and Vice President Warford. Although an official advisory committee was not formed, each steering committee member consulted frequently with a network of concerned and informed constituents.

Setting the Agenda. Building the master plan and establishing the budget went well. The League for Innovation's $5,000 seed money, provided by The Hitachi Foundation, was certainly helpful, as was a $100 contribution from The Register-Guard, Eugene's only daily newspaper. There were also monetary contributions from nine of twenty area cosponsors. The forum coordinators split their duties between content and conference logistics.

It was decided to develop the program by using panel discussions and a keynote speaker, but to use less of the "talking head" method. Evaluation from the first conference indicated that the small group discussions were very popular, so an afternoon small group discussion session was added using case studies based on dislocated worker experiences. Both adaptations were made as a result of lessons learned at the first conference.

Building Support. Because of hardening positions in the timber industry, planners were unable to find as many organizations willing to

publicly endorse or cosponsor the second conference. The weather did not cooperate either, since the designated Saturday was the first sunny weekend after months of rain. As a result, about fifteen people who preregistered did not attend.

Although cosponsorship and attendance were lower than the first conference, the second event drew many people back and added many who had not attended the first. The college also involved college faculty, staff, and students effectively, including student newspaper representatives and the Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group, a student organization.

Promoting the Event. Planners worked closely and effectively with LCC's Institutional Advancement Department to promote and publicize the conference. They established an attractive forum logo for use on programs and posters, employed computerized mailing lists effectively, and secured extensive coverage in school and community newspapers, newsletters, and radio stations. In addition, there was extensive feature coverage on evening and late-night news programs of two of the three local television channels. Effective advertising was one of the forum's strong points.

Hosting the Event. There were only minor last-minute glitches. The first conference was the best possible rehearsal for the second. Planners learned from earlier mistakes. The League for Innovation draft guidelines were also quite helpful as a comprehensive checklist.

Providing Closure. Forum closure was positive and effective. The conference ended on an upbeat note with many participants expressing their appreciation for LCC's sponsorship and for the opportunity to network with a wide variety of people and organizations. Agenda and project time schedules were followed closely.

The follow-up after the conference was less effective, with the summary of the day's recommendations and the list of conference participants mailed some weeks after the event concluded.

Key Recommendations

1. Get started early to get the word out and broaden the base of support.

2. Do not back away from tackling controversial issues. What is worth doing will probably step on some toes and have some risks.

3. Assume the very best of the people who will participate. They will live up—or down—to your expectations.

4. Have a facilitator who is able to move the agenda along without making people feel hurried.

5. Avoid panic.

New Communities: Housing in Central Phoenix

Phoenix College of the Maricopa Community Colleges

Sheila Contreras

Executive Summary

Phoenix College hosted "New Communities," a three-day community forum with the goal of generating an action plan for housing in Central Phoenix. The forum, conducted on September 18, 19, and October 9, 1992, was attended by approximately eighty people on each of the first two days. Approximately fifty people attended the last day-long session. Participants included those who work, reside, or otherwise have an interest in maintaining and improving the central area.

The forum was successful in reaching its outlined goals by examining how the issue of housing is related to many other issues in Central Phoenix. A key outcome of the forum was a report containing numerous recommendations and proposed actions for policy makers in city and state government, neighborhood residents, and others. This report is to serve as the foundation for an action plan that will be developed by a new committee.

The forum's initial coordinator and overall guiding force was Nancy Jordan, dean of community relations at Phoenix College. As a result of her reassignment, the second coordinator became Sheila Contreras, director of community education, who can be reached at Phoenix College, 1202 West Thomas Road, Phoenix, Arizona 85013.

Issue Overview

Housing in Central Phoenix is a complex issue which many groups have tried to address—often from limited perspectives. Topics that are related to housing include economic development, government programs, education, religion, arts and culture, parks and recreation, accessibility and quality of services, safety, and crime. Because of various groups' lack of success in promoting change, there was a need for a coordinated effort among all affected groups to develop new housing and to maintain existing neighborhoods.

In order to avoid turf issues between existing groups, it was decided early on that the forum would augment existing efforts, incorporate the findings or work of other groups, address the needs of the organizations represented in the planning group, and share the outcomes with all interested groups.

The three-day event attempted to accomplish the following goals:

- educate participants about the various issues which affect housing;
- determine the most critical issues and develop recommendations for action;
- review recommendations with policy and decision makers.

Event Summary

Day 1. Because of the diversity of participants and the range of information and expertise they brought, the forum planners wanted to provide enough context to lead to the development of an action plan. To this end, the first day was designed to inform participants about existing efforts and related issues and to motivate them to actively participate in the discussions and planning.

The four-hour session began with a welcome, a report of current activities in Central Phoenix by Mayor Paul Johnson, and a review of the forum's agenda and goals by the forum's

facilitator (the steering committee chairperson). Next, a slide presentation prepared by Michael Dollin from the Arizona State University Downtown Center provided historical context. Participants and panelists then were divided into two groups for hour-long discussions. Following a refreshment break, panel members switched rooms to interact with the second half of the group. These two sets of panel experts represented education, religion, government, crime and security, economic development, neighborhoods, arts and culture, architecture, and property development, and discussed how housing affected or was affected by their area of expertise. The entire group then reconvened, with closing remarks made by Councilman Craig Tribken.

Day 2. The following day was a seven-hour session that began with a keynote address by Tony Salazar of McCormack, Baron and Associates. This nationally known Los Angeles firm is recognized as a leader in the housing development field because of its ability to meld economic success, a quality product, and sensitivity to human needs. Salazar's hour-long address included a slide presentation showing several successful urban projects. The information he shared focused on key ideas about how to develop an action plan for Phoenix. In the question and answer session following his remarks, he fielded a wide array of questions on aspects of his projects that related specifically to Phoenix.

Participants took a break and then met in three predetermined workshop groups, each including about twenty-five people, and led by two moderators. Considering all the forum information, these groups developed priority lists of the most critical issues. They also identified related factors that would help and/or hinder efforts to address these issues. During lunch, each group reported the results of its discussions to the entire group. After lunch, workshop groups again met to determine specific actions to meet identified needs. In each case, they also identified a responsible party who should take action. Finally, the entire group convened at the end of the day for group reports and closing remarks by Councilman Calvin Goode whose district is part of the target area.

A report of all recommendations developed in the workshops was compiled for use in the final conference day held three weeks later.

Day 3. When the group reconvened for the final four-hour session, elected officials and others on the panel responded to the report with their own opinions, advice, and recommendations on how to achieve an action plan for housing. During the break, chairs were reconfigured from lecture style to an informal circle to allow for maximum group interaction during an hour-long question and answer session. During this session, the group began to generate ideas about how to proceed with the plan. Leaders emerged who would organize a committee to spearhead efforts to organize a cross section of expertise to help achieve the long-term goal of improved housing in Central Phoenix. This group has subsequently divided into two groups; one will address state legislation that promotes affordable housing, and the second will address policy and related concerns that are more germane to the central city.

Guidelines Feedback

Getting Started. Determining that the forum would address housing and related issues in Central Phoenix was not a difficult decision. As a community member, Phoenix College had made previous attempts to address the important basic social service needs of the community that specifically affect its students. Availability of appropriate housing and the connection between housing and other student needs was seen as a natural extension of the college's previous efforts.

A steering committee was easily established by the college's dean of community relations, who became the initial coordinator for the forum. The committee was chaired by the president of Phoenix Revitalization Corporation, a nonprofit housing corporation specializing in technical assistance on affordable housing that serves low-income families and is currently

involved in revitalizing a neighborhood near downtown. A committee member helped the group locate a detail-oriented part-time staff person to act as the project coordinator.

Selecting the Agenda. Since there were several good suggestions regarding how the event could be organized, the committee spent a considerable amount of time in determining the simplest forum agenda that would result in a positive outcome. The agenda was designated to begin with broad, general session topics that were eventually narrowed to topics with specific goals for each session. In fact, each activity included a desired goal that built upon the previous session.

Building Support. Building a network of individuals to participate on the steering committee was not a difficult process due to the initial coordinator's excellent networking capabilities. Community participants provided the leadership from the beginning, and many local leaders were involved in planning and conducting the forum. Two college staff participated on the steering committee; the public relations director helped with the planning process; and three faculty members participated as workshop moderators.

Promoting the Event. Word-of-mouth publicity for the forum seemed to be the most effective method for getting people to attend. Although a letter of invitation targeted those known to be interested in maintaining Central Phoenix, a three-day commitment was hard to secure. Registration increased when committee members followed up with potential participants. A media release was prepared by Phoenix College's public relations office. However, the event received no media coverage. It was difficult to determine why the media was not more interested.

The external community was easier to involve than the internal college community because of the required three-day commitment.

Hosting the Event. Hosting the event was a relatively smooth process, with logistical planning handled by the project coordinator. There was built-in flex time in the agenda that made it possible to end each day on time. The layout of the facility was especially helpful in facilitating the movement of people between activities. The conference area included a large room which was used when the entire group was together, and three smaller rooms that were suitable for break-out sessions. A central area, used to serve food and beverages, was set up without disruption to the workshops in session. Registration took place in an outside space, leaving the conference area free for program use.

Providing Closure. By design, closure was obtained through feedback gathered on the last day. Participants reacted to recommendations developed in all three sessions. A written report of ideas generated in workshop groups was also available for participants on the last day. This allowed all participants to have a permanent record they could reference as needed.

Key Recommendations

1. Consider an invitation-only event. The letter of invitation for this forum was signed by the governor of Arizona, the mayor of Phoenix, and the president of Phoenix College. The signatures were used to give an element of importance and significance to the event.

2. Allow for refreshment breaks between each activity to keep energy high and to encourage interaction among participants. In this case, each activity was planned to take place in about an hour to avoid overwhelming participants.

3. Consider assigning two moderators to each workshop group to review the assignment and keep the group on track.

4. Give the moderators the freedom to determine the best way to complete group assignments. Making structures too rigid discourages creativity.

5. Use the registration form to gather information about a participant's area of interest, affiliation, or professional

responsibility. These data can then be used to determine workshop groupings and ensure a cross section of opinion.

6. Consider unconventional groupings in forming the steering committee. In this case, the committee was made up of an interesting collection from Phoenix College, Arizona State University, state and city entities, and a neighborhood organization.

7. Consider hiring a project coordinator to execute the steering committee's plan for the forum. In this case, the project coordinator dedicated a minimum of fifteen hours a week for twelve weeks to coordinate and execute all aspects of the forum.

8. Expect unexpected issues to arise and be prepared with back-up plans. For example, when a keynote speaker had a family emergency, his associate stepped in to speak for him. When the facilitator whose job it was to keep the conference agenda moving was unable to attend two of the three sessions, the steering committee chairperson was able to fill this role. However, in one case, no replacement could be found for the panel member who was to discuss the availability of social services. As a result, the conference lacked representation on this important issue.

Now That You Have Lost Your Job, How Are You Going to Get One Back?

Delta College

Barbara Tedrow

Executive Summary

On Thursday, November 5, 1992, at the International Centre in downtown Saginaw, Michigan, more than 400 area residents attended, "Now That You've Lost Your Job, How Are You Going to Get One Back?" The event was directed by the college's Global/International Education Office and included a career information fair supported by the college's Career Planning and Placement Office.

Cosponsors were the Michigan Employment Security Commission (MESC), the League of Women Voters, and Saginaw Valley State University. The participant group included those underemployed, unemployed, or seeking a career change from the three counties that make up the college's service area. Twenty-five percent of participants were Bay County residents; sixteen percent, Midland County residents; and fifty-seven percent, Saginaw County residents.

The forum goals, all of which were met, were to (1) create an awareness about the issues surrounding the current economic downturn, (2) identify strategies to promote the community's economic development, (3) identify strategies and skills needed to help individuals find jobs in the current market, (4) offer opportunities for networking with local employers, and (5) provide feedback to all co-sponsors and participants.

A six-month planning process preceded the event. The college is currently in the process of analyzing the data gathered from the community forum to plan future programs. For further inquiries, contact Barbara Tedrow, Director of Global/International Education at Delta College, University Center, Michigan 48710.

Issue Overview

The major issue facing the Tri-Cities area is unemployment. General Motors, the primary local employer, faced an economic downturn in the eighties when auto sales slumped as a result of increasing competition from foreign markets. Much confusion followed, with many groups and policies blamed for the emerging bleak economic picture. As a result, the economic downturn has been attributed to the Japanese pattern of targeting American markets, the lowering of tariffs on foreign goods, affirmative action policies, powerful labor unions, and poor corporate management.

Over time, the dramatic loss of economic prosperity has caused residents to feel helpless and hopeless.

Event Summary

Format. The day-long event unfolded in four phases. First, a keynote was presented by Walter Adams, a noted economist from Michigan State University. He summarized the reasons for the economic downturn in this country, in particular describing the deregulation of business, which led to big business mergers rather than the research and development that tends to provide job growth. Adams used the automobile industry, specifically General Motors, as an example of "bigness" that did not work. GM's centralized planning has not been conducive to world-class competitiveness because it breeds inefficiency and is not cost effective. Under such circumstances, the large corporation was also not technologically innovative, could not maintain quality, and lost control of the world market. Adams' remarks were followed by a brief question and answer session.

The second phase of the program began with panel presentations by local business and industrial leaders, each of whom had seven minutes to respond to Adams' remarks. The panelists represented a regional economic planning office, a small business, the Michigan Employment Security Commission, General Motors, a training agency, and a chamber of commerce. Work attitudes and skills were stressed as major factors in job security by the panelists whose comments were followed by questions from the audience.

The third phrase was a brainstorming session which addressed two questions: what can the community do to deal with the economic downturn, and what can individuals do to help themselves deal with this reality? Participants were seated by fives at eighty round tables, each with a group facilitator. As they concluded, the large group facilitator asked each group to report findings at a microphone in the center of the room. This brainstorming and reporting process took approximately an hour and a half.

The forum broke for lunch from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. The event ended with a career information fair from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. in an adjoining conference room. Over fifty local businesses were exhibitors and approximately 200 forum participants attended the fair.

Evaluation and Follow-Up. The community forum was clearly a success. Because a large cross-section of the community attended, the flow of ideas in the brainstorming session was animated and enthusiastic, and the ideas were helpful. The level of community support was gratifying, especially the involvement of the League of Women Voters and MESC. The college's support of the effort was excellent.

As part of follow-up, the same participant group was invited to Global Awareness Week since the event features a special program on workplace literacy. Other follow-up activities included mailing a letter from Delta College, MESC, and the League of Women Voters to the participants summarizing the many suggestions generated through the brainstorming session.

Guidelines Feedback

Getting Started. The initial meeting for planners of the community forum was organized by Johanna Kobran and Hal Arman from the college. They asked constituent representatives at the college to identify the forum's critical issue. The group unanimously agreed to focus on the high unemployment rate in the Tri-Counties area. The first meeting was held a year in advance, but the actual planning began six months later at the second meeting. The remaining six months was enough time to organize, plan, and promote the forum. Finding the best title to publicize the event was an early problem. The college's Global/International Education Office was selected to plan, organize, and deliver the program because its mission matched the long-range goals of the forum.

Setting the Agenda. Once the title was identified, "Now That You Lost Your Job, How Are You Going to Get One Back?," the format became an issue. A few members of the committee felt the program should give only practical advice. However, eventually the planning group agreed to ask an expert to present an overview of the economic downturn, followed by a panel discussion in which local business leaders would respond to his views. Program evaluations indicate that this inclusion of both conceptual and practical aspects of the problem proved useful.

Building Support. Because of the interest in unemployment and the desire for community problem solving on this issue, building support was not difficult. The League of Women Voters and MESC were natural partners. However, since MESC would not support the forum unless it was a free event, various groups provided additional support. The League's education committee funded the cost of the information packets on career planning. They also volunteered to staff registration tables and act as facilitators. While MESC gave no money, they committed to market the event to all clients in the three counties. The college's Career Planning and Placement Office organized the career exploration fair with the support of

Saginaw Valley State University. College faculty and staff also helped facilitate and identify the keynote speaker and panelists.

Promoting the Event. The primary promotion was provided by MESC. In addition, the college relations office sent press releases to all local newspapers, radio, and TV Stations. Because the event was free, public-service announcements were used extensively. There were also three television interviews prior to the forum and much newspaper coverage after the event.

Hosting the Event. The program coordinator and a secretary handled logistical planning. An effective strategy just before the event was to walk through the forum—looking at plans from the participant perspective, the panelist/speaker perspective, and the volunteer perspective. This strategy reduced the number of problems related to an array of matters: placement of signs, parking, location of restaurants, coat and bathroom facilities, registration forms and surveys, the location of volunteer command posts, the location of registration tables, and volunteer logistics. As a consequence of this close attention, there were few snafus.

Providing Closure. Closure was by far the most difficult phase of the forum. All participants were mailed a compilation of the suggestions generated during the brainstorming session. Currently, a newsletter is in development and will be mailed to interested parties. MESC is promoting the college's Global Awareness Week because of its special emphasis on workplace literacy. The planning committee also met to go over the data gathered at the forum, discussing several possible options for forums next year.

Key Recommendations

1. Seek broad college support for the forum. Delta College's culture necessitated the involvement of academic, community service, and administrative components of the college in the planning process. The broad support proved helpful.

2. Define the issue carefully. It was very helpful to present a balance of theoretical and practical elements in framing the unemployment issue. This approach stimulated critical thinking and constructive problem solving among the participants.

3. Develop a project plan at the beginning to maintain control of the event. The design should include desired goals, implementation procedures, a budget, a marketing plan, and data gathering procedures.

4. Do not underestimate the audience. If the topic is well presented, participants will respond in a consensus-building session.

5. Make consensus building and problem solving major parts of the forum. Ask participants to become involved in these processes.

6. Use a facility that has fully developed support services. For example, if more than one standing microphone is needed, make sure the facility can accommodate that need.

7. Give staff the needed space and office support to do the job.

8. Follow through. Community forums will not produce the desired results if there is poor communication after the event.

Education for Health Career Ladders: Monroe County's Needs

Monroe Community College

Barbara Kirk and Janet Glocker

Executive Summary

"Education For Health Career Ladders: Monroe County's Needs," a community forum hosted by Monroe Community College, was held on October 8, 1992. Fifty-seven participants from various health agencies, educational institutions, and community organizations convened at the Gateway Banquet and Conference Center in Henrietta, a suburb of Rochester, New York. The forum was a result of several months of planning by a four-member team from Monroe Community College. It generated much interest in and support of health career ladder programs. Potential programs and modifications for present programs were determined, participants indicated interest in collaborating with the college, and several funding sources were suggested. These outcomes suggest initial achievement of forum goals; however, on-going follow-up will be necessary to further their development. Inquiries may be made of Janet Glocker, Dean of Business and Health Professions, Monroe Community College, 1000 E. Henrietta Rd., Rochester, New York 14623.

Issue Overview

Across the nation, health occupations are predicted to grow another one percent by the year 2005, reaching nine percent of total employment. The total projected health services employment growth from 1990-2005 is 3.9 million. A recent New York State Department of Labor report indicates that health related fields in the Finger Lakes Region, which includes Monroe County, are growth occupations and will show at least a one percent increase per year even during economic recession. Additionally, the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency reports current shortages of health care workers.

Monroe County has many health care employers who require educated health care providers who can meet the growing needs of the community. Further, since the area currently has a high percentage of elderly and the county's population will continue to age, the need for health care services will only increase. Monroe County also has untapped sources of workers in both the economically disadvantaged and minority segments of community life. The challenge is to provide the means for these potential employees in the community to enter health care fields.

The PEW Health Professions Commission's recently released report notes that many employees in lower-level positions have the capability of moving up meaningful career ladders. The commission recommends partnerships between educational programs and employers, flexibility to permit earlier entrance into health care fields, promotion of vertical and horizontal articulation, and the design and testing of new and alternative pathways. They also point out that collaboration between educational institutions and employers could lead to new ways to finance health field education.

One task of the community college is to explore strategies to integrate employment needs with students' educational interests. There is excellent potential for such integration in health care. Career ladders provide prospective students with the ability to progress in their careers at a pace dictated by their needs and abilities. These pathways are particularly attractive to the economically disadvantaged, single parents, and primary providers in households. It provides them the opportunity, depending upon circumstances, to progress up

the ladder or to remain at the present level.

After reviewing the data related to job potential in health fields and career ladders, key players were assembled to help frame the issue. These players included:

- Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency and the New York State Department of Labor, both of which identify local demand for several health occupations;
- National Center on Education and the Economy, which had recently surveyed area employers in relation to health care job needs;
- Center for Governmental Research, which collects and interprets demographic data;
- The PEW Health Professions Commission, which recommends flexibility to facilitate earlier entrance into health care fields;
- Monroe Community College Steering/ Advisory Committee, which helped set direction for the forum;
- Monroe Community College allied health program, which has a nursing-related career ladder currently in place and is in the process of developing a health information management career ladder.

Exploring education for health career ladders in Monroe County became the key focus of the forum. Specific forum goals were directed toward:

- increasing collaboration between the community and the college;
- identifying health related programs, in which career ladders can be implemented;
- modifying health-related program models;
- identifying financial and other sources of support for such programs.

Event Summary

The day-long forum involved four phases. In the first phase, there were two speakers: Jana Carlisle, staff associate of the National Center on Education and the Economy, and Ralph Sell, director of demography and social research of the Center for Governmental Research. Carlisle summarized survey results and described the national tech-prep program, a high school-to-college initiative. Sell presented an overview of demographic data, considering possible implications for present and future health care needs in the community, as well as entry-level job opportunities.

In the second phase of the forum, career ladders were showcased as pathways to success. Three Monroe Community College members made presentations. Jeffrey Bartkovich, assistant vice president for curriculum, identified the advantages of career ladders from student, agency, and educational perspectives. Helene Charron, chair of the Nursing Department, described a career ladder in nursing-related occupations from high school through baccalaureate-level nursing. Brenda Embrey, chair of Health Related Professions, presented a health information management career ladder which is under development. These presentations were followed by a question and answer session.

Next, was a keynote address by Edward Salsberg, director of the Bureau of Health Resources Development for the New York State Department of Health. His address was entitled, "Partnering to Minimize the Costs of Health Care Training and Education." Salsberg focused on innovative strategies for education and training and on the fiscal arrangements and agreements that facilitate these strategies.

This phase of the forum was followed by a series of small group sessions. Participants were assigned to groups of six to eight members, based on their professional field and/ or agency affiliation. Each group was led by a

trained facilitator and was assigned two major tasks: critiquing the career ladders currently in place and brainstorming other potential career ladders. Based on the earlier discussions and a particular group's knowledge of the health community's needs, half of the groups were assigned to critique the nursing-related career ladder, while the other half critiqued the career ladder in health information management. All groups were assigned the second brainstorming task related to potential career ladders.

Groups identified agencies and institutions already active in training, sources for fiscal support, foundations which might fund specific portions of a career ladder, and sources of donated/loaned equipment. For the second task, a spokesperson from each group presented the results of the discussion to the entire audience. Unfortunately, the goal of identifying sources of financial support was met in only a general way, and few specific funding sources were reported.

Evaluations collected at the end of the day indicated enthusiasm for the topic and a willingness to commit to on-going work in developing career ladder options. This enthusiasm was further demonstrated when participants remained to continue discussions and when a number of requests were received for copies of videotaped portions of the forum. A follow-up evaluation, sent to participants within two weeks of the forum, indicated that planners were successful in bringing together people from various agencies to work on the problem. Responses also indicated that as a result of the forum, participants had discussed the topic with an average of five or more individuals.

Impact and Follow-Up

- Three of the four goals of the forum were met. Specific funding sources must still be explored.
- The college's image as a leader in the community was enhanced.
- The college successfully fulfilled its role as a catalyst in bringing people together from various agencies.
- There is increased potential for transfer and articulation agreements with area colleges.
- Project results will influence curricular strategic planning initiatives for the college.
- New faculty were provided professional development opportunities.
- An Associate of Science degree in health is being explored which would permit transfer to an upper-level program.
- The mailing list that was generated is being used as a resource by the tech-prep consortium to validate initial outcome statements.
- One Monroe Community College faculty member, Brenda Embrey, has been chosen to attend LEADERS, a professional development program for women administrators in higher education. Her project is titled, "Developing Career Ladders in Health Information Management."
- Research will be conducted to identify available grants applicable to health careers.
- A similar forum focused on health information management has been proposed.
- Two cooperative ventures between specific community agencies and the college are being explored.

Guidelines Feedback

Getting Started. A group of interested faculty members met and agreed that the forum topic should be related to the health field. Many subtopics under this general heading were

suggested, and each was discussed by the group until the topic of education for health career ladders was chosen. Networking with other groups, local and state, showed that this was an interesting and timely topic. Some participants indicated that they would like to participate in a similar forum, but with a more focused approach that would limit the topic to one health field rather than many.

Setting the Agenda. Planning went smoothly once time frames for selected activities were plotted. The budget was developed to keep within a stated amount (Hitachi Grant) with additional monies from the Division of Business and Health Professions available, if necessary. Printing, duplication, and other materials were obtained through college resources. The format for the forum evolved as the issue was defined and was well received by participants.

Building Support. Developing a mailing list of potential participants proved to be a time-consuming task. Tapping into existing networks and key individuals in the field laid the foundation for the developing list. Based on the forum's evaluations, the investment of time and effort continues to yield dividends. One participant noted that even those without health field or education backgrounds were able to participate. For future forums, groups such as private agencies, voluntary agencies, and high schools will be encouraged to increase their representation.

Promoting the Event. The forum was not publicized formally prior to the event. A decision was made early in the planning to limit the number of participants to assure that trained facilitators and appropriately sized groups could work effectively in the afternoon brainstorming sessions. Even so, word of mouth resulted in phone calls requesting invitations and duplication of reservation forms within an organization. Print materials were prepared by the college. The logo for the forum was included on all these materials.

Hosting the Event. Weekly meetings of the steering committee helped to ensure that all logistical planning was complete, and few details were left for the day of the forum. Even the assignment of participants to small groups was accomplished ahead of time, with the understanding that some last minute changes would be necessary. A training session for facilitators of the small groups was held the week prior to the forum. These facilitators also acted as hosts and hostesses during the day. A last meeting was held the day before the forum as a dry run. Over 400 hours of documented time was spent in planning, execution, and follow-up of the forum.

Providing Closure. Evaluation forms were distributed at the end of the forum. A few participants left early without completing these forms, but each has been included in the follow-up evaluation. Each participant was mailed a post-forum packet which contained a follow-up evaluation with self-addressed stamped envelope, a summary of the day's evaluations, and an attendees list. Several post-forum committee meetings have taken place. It is anticipated that the ripple effect of the forum will create further opportunities.

Key Recommendations

1. Emphasize cooperation among the planning team as an important planning element.

2. Pay attention to detail, each and every one. The guidelines, or portions thereof, were very helpful.

3. Be mindful of the future. As you contemplate possible outcomes, realize that the forum may be only the beginning of continuing responsibilities.

4. Be aware that when participants work in the area they may attend only part of the day. Plan for early departures.

5. Have table flower arrangements low enough for people to see others at the table.

6. Include facilitator training for small group

sessions to ensure goals are reached.

7. Recognize that trying to wear two hats on the day of the forum is not practical. Be willing to assign responsibility to others.

8. Make handouts of speakers' material available before the presentation begins so the audience does not have to take complete notes.

9. Plan for professional development opportunities.

10. Be sensitive to specific participant needs which may arise (e.g. food, phone access).

In providing funding and careful guidance while maximizing flexibility, The Hitachi Foundation and the League for Innovation in the Community College helped motivate, shape, and energize this group. College planning, follow through, and self-examination were so thorough that the steering group even decided the table flower arrangements were too tall!

Hispanic Education: A Community Forum to Forge Successful Partnerships

North Lake College of the Dallas County Community College District

Joel Vela, Lynn Brink, and Sue Lee

Executive Summary

"Hispanic Education: A Community Forum to Forge Successful Partnerships," was hosted by North Lake College on May 1, 1992. It focused on issues confronting school districts that serve emerging Hispanic student populations. The forum brought together school trustees, superintendents, administrators, principals, and teachers in a collaborative effort to devise a Dallas County plan which would guide school districts as they establish policies and procedures aimed specifically at the Hispanic student population.

The forum was conceived by North Lake College personnel: the vice president of instruction, a journalism instructor who is also president of the board of the Dallas Independent School District, a government instructor, and the president's administrative assistant. Later, the committee was enlarged to include a member of the Irving Independent School District's board and a businessman representing the Irving Hispanic Forum. In addition, as plans progressed, the Irving school superintendent volunteered to cohost the forum.

The agenda for the forum emphasized many challenging areas which affect Hispanic students: drop out, bilingual education, curriculum and instruction, recruitment, gangs, home-school relations, staff development, retention, and linkages. It further stressed the importance of networking among school districts to solve problems of mutual interest and concern. In addition, it provided an opportunity for attending districts to share successful strategies. Further inquiries may be made of Sue Lee, Assistant to the President, North Lake College, 5001 N. MacArthur Boulevard, Irving, TX 75038.

Event Summary

The day-long forum included four components: a morning keynote address, morning breakout sessions covering four topics, a luncheon address, and afternoon breakout sessions examining a second group of four topics.

Keynote Speaker. Pablo Perez, superintendent of McAllen Independent School District, began the conference by showcasing successful strategies in his district. The McAllen student body is predominantly Hispanic; under Perez's leadership, the drop-out rate has declined while the graduation rate has dramatically increased. Perez described several successful programs. He also brought two staff members who attended the breakout sessions and exchanged strategies with other participants.

Breakout Sessions. During both morning and afternoon sessions, participants were assigned to one of four breakout groups. The breakout topics in the morning included: home-school relations, bilingual education, gangs, and drop-out prevention; and in the afternoon recruitment, middle college programming, staff development, and curriculum and instruction .

Luncheon Speaker. The informal lunch gave participants time to dialogue with members of their breakout groups. The luncheon speaker, Victor Herbert, superintendent of Phoenix Union High School District, provided enthusiasm and humor, as well as the conceptual base needed to stimulate afternoon discussion. Having also been principal of Gompers High School in the Bronx, New York, Herbert was able to include additional examples of overcoming challenges from that milieu as well. Both the keynote and luncheon presentations were videotaped, and each school district

received a copy to use in staff development programs.

Follow-Up. The conference evaluations indicated positive responses on a number of factors and offered suggestions for improvement. The most frequent request was for a follow-up session in late fall or early spring.

Key Recommendations

1. Do not try to accomplish too much. Participants indicated there were too many breakout topics.

2. Allow participants to choose rather than be placed in small group sessions. This could be accomplished by listing choices in the conference invitation and asking participants to indicate preferences in the RSVP process.

3. Carefully consider the timing of the event. The date of the forum caused some hardship because it occurred late in the school year. Also, an all-day Friday conference was difficult for some administrators to attend.

4. Be persistent in asking for resource materials. Although school districts were asked to share materials which described successful programs, no one responded. However, since several participants emphasized a need for this kind of information, it was requested again after the forum to be included in a final report mailed to all the participating school districts.

5. Provide the facilitators conducting the breakout sessions research materials on topics ahead of time.

6. Find creative ways to use students. A few students served as guides, directing participants and sitting in on breakout sessions. However, more opportunities to involve students and parents would have been helpful.

7. Be sure there is adequate publicity. Although there were several newspaper articles advertising the conference, many participants requested more.

8. Involve a broad cross-section of community and college leaders.

Seattle's Urban Villages: What They Are and Where They Will Be Located

Seattle Community College District

Dena Dawson and A. Barretto Ogilvie

Executive Summary

The Seattle Community College District and the city of Seattle cosponsored a citywide electronic town hall meeting on July 21, 1992. Mayor Norman Rice and a panel of growth management experts, including senior members of the department of planning, conducted a live, televised presentation entitled, "Seattle's Urban Villages: What They Are and Where They Will Be Located." The program was broadcast over Channel 27 to cable home viewers and to three campuses of the Seattle Community College District (North Seattle, Seattle Central, and South Seattle). At each site, citizens, college administrators, faculty, and students convened to view the presentation and to question the mayor and the panel via telephone hookup. Following the televised presentation, an on-site, live public discussion took place at each campus location.

Attendance at the three sites totaled nearly one hundred, consisting mostly of interested citizens and college students. It is estimated that several hundred more viewed the proceedings at home. All those who participated—attendees, planners, implementers, and presenters—considered the event a success. The intent was to demonstrate both cost effectiveness and ease of use of electronic media for town hall meetings. The mayor indicated that his office plans to make use of the technology again to increase community involvement in planning.

The key players involved in framing the issue were the mayor's office and the city's neighborhoods and planning offices. The role of the community college was mainly to initiate the project and then to facilitate it by making its expertise in the technology to be used available to the mayor and to city departments. Also included in the implementation were the state-owned TRIAD (electronic classroom) Studio and Cable Channel 27. This project was coordinated by Seattle Central's Center for Educational Telecommunications. For further information, please contact A. Barretto Ogilvie, Dean of Continuing and Professional Education, Seattle Central Community College, 1701 Broadway, Seattle, WA 98122.

Issue Overview

By many indices, Seattle is considered a good place to live and work. According to the mayor, it is "a shining example of high quality urban life." However, to ensure that future generations enjoy the same opportunities as current residents, policies must be developed which not only preserve neighborhood character and a healthy regional environment, but encourage balanced growth. The mayor's growth plan proposes that development cluster around connecting points in a regional transit system, rather than spreading out along the city's arterials, which is the standard mode of urban growth.

As the city moves toward formulation and adoption of a comprehensive plan (formal adoption is expected in 1993), it has established a framework to guide the process of making coordinated, long-term decisions. Thus, framework policies embody the mayor's goals for the city—they are the critical underpinning of the entire planning effort.

The purposes of the forum were the following:

- to increase citizen awareness of and interest in the city's growth management plan and the urban village concept and

- to introduce live interactive telecommunications as a mode for increasing citizen awareness and involvement in the formulation of municipal policy.

Event Summary

At each of the three sites, the same pattern of events was followed:

6:00-7:00 p.m. An open house at each site. Displays showcased growth management information and proposals. Planning department staff were on hand to answer questions and listen to comments.

7:00-7:30 p.m. From the TRIAD television studio. The mayor's presentation, including a 15-minute video and a 10-minute slide show.

7:30-8:30 p.m. Live interactive portion. A great number of questions for the mayor and the department of planning management panel, plus comments on the framework policies by audience members using the telephone hookups at the three sites.

8:30-9:00 p.m. Remote site discussion. Live discussion of the televised presentation among remote site panel members and attendees at the three colleges.

All the technological elements (cable and telephone hook-ups) worked well. Although the costs were low, the event required many hours of preparation and coordination. Because the planning department decided to use two "canned" pieces (a video and a slide show) in the broadcast, the mayor's actual interactive time was felt by some to be too short—or at least the ratio between interactive time and prepared presentation seemed out of balance.

Audience participants were interested in and knowledgeable about the topic. Many had questions for the mayor and the panel of experts. Later, in follow-up dialogue, they were eager to continue discussion about the pros and cons of growth management and the urban village concept. Overall, it became clear that the college's role was to make its expertise in the use of technology available and, beyond that, to facilitate the event. The city considered the college's involvement in this arena quite useful.

Guidelines Feedback

Getting Started. The mayor's office responded positively to the initial suggestion of a collaborative effort. A tentative agreement was reached between the college, the mayor's office, and the city's neighborhood and planning offices late in 1991. During this initial phase, the city proposed six possible town meeting topics. In February of 1992, the Department of Neighborhoods televised a meeting on Channel 27 which became a kind of trial project in our discussions with the city. The project staff met with the city offices numerous times to discuss and plan the project. Initially, city staff reaction was neutral; however, as plans crystallized, staff members became more excited about the project.

Because of the numerous meetings with the city necessary to work through the topic possibilities and to determine who would be responsible for what, the forum was first scheduled for April, then for May, then June, before the July date became firm. Interestingly, the topic finally settled upon was not one of the six originally suggested.

Selecting the Agenda. While meetings were going on with the city, Seattle Central campus staff conducted an extensive search and cost evaluation of the most feasible technology to use for the electronic town hall meeting. The project committee met to discuss the format of the event, building on the technological experience of Seattle Central and the Department of Neighborhoods.

Once the topic was finally selected, the format of the actual event and operational considerations were fairly easy to work out. However, because the city had its own agenda and priorities, many details had to be negotiated.

Building Support. While the college worked on the logistics and coordinated the technology for the forum, representatives of the various city departments explored how current city networks could be informed and persuaded to participate. The topic was clearly of considerable current interest to a number of groups in the city, all of whom were potential participants

in the electronic town hall meeting.

Promoting the Event. The Department of Neighborhoods prepared a flier to send to their network of individuals and organizations interested in growth management. They also promoted the event in their office's newsletter. The city contacted the Seattle Chamber of Commerce. In all, about 5,000 pieces of literature on the forum were sent out, including news releases to newspapers and radio and television stations. As a result, a number of articles on the upcoming forum appeared in major and neighborhood newspapers, plus a lengthy news item on the local TV news program.

In the meantime, the college advertised the forum to selected faculty members at all three campuses, inviting them to bring their classes to the on-site dialogue.

Hosting the Event. The college project staff contacted the three campuses and coordinated arrangements for the event. The staff also prepared a briefing and operational package for all participants at the three sites, as well as for city staff.

Project and city staff worked with TRIAD studios to make sure all went well with the broadcast. TRIAD worked out arrangements with Channel 27.

Given all the planning that went into the event, there were no significant problems at any of the sites. However, because of the number of players, there was some role confusion.

Providing Closure. The college's project staff met with city staff to discuss and debrief. The project coordinator made sure that all participants were thanked by letter for their part in the forum. The city departments were excited about the electronic town meeting format as a result of this positive experience, and the mayor indicated he would like to use the format again.

Key Recommendations

1. Use initial grant monies as a base to secure other/matching funds.

2. To secure greater citizen participation, involve many sectors of the community—government agencies, community groups, businesses, etc.

3. Use various networks—public information, community, and business—in addition to the standard public media to generate increased public awareness and enthusiasm.

4. Develop and administer a feedback mechanism to determine the impact of the event and the saliency of the issue.

5. Use experienced television producers to give a professional look to the presentation, which is essential to retain viewers. Involve them in planning the content, format, and direction of the show.

6. Ensure smooth and effective operations at the event through extensive planning and training of site facilitators and emcees.

7. Allow greater time for post-show discussion; citizens want to talk about the issues among themselves and with panel members.

Can We Break the Cycle?
A Forum on Crime In Our Area

Kirkwood Community College

Richard Pankey

Executive Summary

Crime in the Cedar Rapids area was the topic of a forum that Kirkwood Community College hosted on Thursday, November 19, 1992. The college provided a neutral location by hosting the event on its campus in Iowa Hall, Kirkwood's convention and meeting hall. Even though it was a blustery, rainy night, sixty-two participants attended the forum, including service agency staff, residents, college professionals, and civic and business leaders. Approximately seventy-five percent of the audience represented social service, correction, and/or human service agencies, with fifteen percent from the business community, and the remaining ten percent from the community at large. Richard L. Pankey facilitated a ten-month planning process working closely with Carl Self, the college marketing director and Jean Kuehl of the 6th Judicial District Department of Correctional Services.

The forum included the following elements: a dialogue on local and state crime issues; a video presentation in which adjudicated youth discussed their perceptions of how and why they committed crimes; a discussion of the systems that are or are not now working to "break the cycle"; and a review of solutions or action steps to deal with the crime problem. While participants did not reach consensus on action steps, the forum did provide a foundation of understanding and awareness. The most important outcome of the forum was that the mayor of Cedar Rapids openly accepted a leadership role by establishing a task force to work on crime in the community. For further information, please contact Richard Pankey, Director, Kirkwood Industrial Modernization Services, Kirkwood Community College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406.

Issue Overview

While the Cedar Rapids crime rate is not as serious as other metropolitan areas, recent events indicate that the city must take action before the problem becomes more serious as a result of increased gang, drug, and criminal activity among its youth.

It is easy to ignore the problem of crime. Many view it as a problem of specific socioeconomic groups. Too often, the impetus to become involved is weak because community leaders view the problem as one that can be solved simply with more money or larger prisons. It then becomes more likely that problem solving will be left to various agencies, suggesting solutions that address only one aspect of the problem.

Further, the number of young people under the age of twenty-one that are released from incarceration continues to rise, and they present specific problems because they are not adequately served by employment and education service providers. Rather, they drift until they again commit a crime. Programs must be designed to attack the problem at the family level, with a communitywide delivery system to provide services to the entire family unit. Such a comprehensive community-based process is necessary to change the environment and the asocial behavior of adjudicated youth. As one key player, business must see their involvement in these community-based programs as a sound investment in the future.

Forum Issue and Goals. Members of the planning committee agonized over the issue and purpose of the forum. After three lengthy planning meetings, the forum's focus became: gaining consensus and support from the community to deter crime among youth through

community-based support programs. The forum's goals became:

- to educate the community on present service delivery and community-based problems.
- to humanize the crime issue.
- to educate the business community on the crime problem.
- to entice the community to take ownership of the problem and assist in its resolution.
- to provide an opportunity for community leaders to accept a leadership role.

Event Summary

The structure for the two-hour evening session was that of a "talk show." Richard Pankey and Carl Self, who were responsible for planning the forum, served as moderators. The session was videotaped to allow future viewing through Kirkwood's cable TV channel. The moderators used a structured discussion format. This appeared to make the audience and panel more willing to discuss and/or debate the issue. As panelists and moderators interacted with each other and the audience, a positive and spirited discussion ensued.

A six-member panel included representatives from the following organizations: Metro High School, which provides alternative education for at-risk youth; the SAFE Coalition of Cedar Rapids, which implements and coordinates community activities; the Linn County Sheriff's Department; the 6th Judicial District Department of Correctional Services, which serves offenders who remain in the community; the Linn County Attorney, who prosecutes those involved in criminal activity; and the Department of Human Services, which manages the personnel and economic needs of citizens most in need.

After the welcome, introduction of the panel, and establishment of ground rules, the evening progressed through three acts, each followed by audience involvement and video clips of ex-offenders. Act I looked at the scope of the problem in Cedar Rapids, considering how it affects quality of life in the area. Each panel member was asked to respond to these topics from his/her perspective. Audience discussion followed and a video clip was shown which concentrated on how an offender becomes involved in crime, explaining the role of drugs and alcohol abuse in that involvement.

Act II consisted of an emotional discussion concerning the causes of crime. In particular, the discussion examined the role that education and family play in these causes. Many members of the audience shared their own experiences. This portion of the program was successful in helping the audience take ownership of the problem.

In Act III, which was introduced by a video clip of an ex-offender, participants looked at what does and does not work to help correct the problem or "break the cycle." Panelists were asked to contribute based on their expertise. The audience was then asked what action steps they could take as citizens and business leaders. Several members in the audience accepted the challenge to do more. The most prominent volunteer was the mayor of Cedar Rapids.

While the format chosen did not produce solutions, it did humanize the issue, raise the consciousness of participants, and garner enthusiasm and commitment. More important, forum participants felt strongly about building a unified, community-based effort and were encouraged by the discussion, but felt frustrated that more members of the business community were not present. Planners and participants offered the following evaluation of the workshop's success:

- Goals were met in the areas of education, awareness, and leadership.
- The steering committee felt the forum "preached to the choir," with a large proportion of the audience coming from

social service agencies. Specifically, the business community was not strongly represented.

- Hard, probing questions were not asked of panelists and the audience. Consequently, the forum was too general.

- The forum demonstrated the ability of agencies to come together and focus on a critical issue.

- The forum was an important first step in stimulating community involvement in this problem.

The steering committee included Kirkwood staff, correctional services staff, law enforcement representatives, and juvenile court staff. Kirkwood was a credible convener, having for several years been involved with an adult community correctional center and educational delivery projects for the criminally at-risk youth.

The biggest obstacle during this early phase involved setting up and coordinating the work of the steering committee. The following comments were offered by planners about this phase: (1) steering committee members were informally selected without organizers researching agency lists or consulting key agency staff; (2) new members were constantly added to the team; (3) no training sessions for the steering committee were conducted. As a result, the steering committee experienced great difficulty in narrowing the focus of the forum.

Setting the Agenda. Due to the complexity of the issue, a subgroup of the steering committee developed the program and coordinated logistics. This became necessary to keep the forum focused, manageable, and on schedule. All recommendations made by the smaller group were reviewed by the steering committee and key business leaders to be sure the agenda and format were acceptable. The facilities and format for the program worked well.

Building Support. Recent press coverage of the crime issue made it possible to find support and commitment from social, correctional, civic and human service agencies. However, the committee did experience difficulty in reaching and involving the business community. Planners assessed this outcome in two ways: some felt earlier contact with business leaders during the planning process would have yielded higher participation; others felt low interest meant that the business community was not ready to take ownership of the crime issue or work cooperatively toward its resolution.

Promoting the Event. Due to the sensitive and somewhat volatile nature of the subject matter, steering committee members wanted a specific mix in the audience, as well as a manageable number of participants. Therefore, an intense promotional campaign was not undertaken. Participants were invited to attend.

Hosting the Event. There was concern that a "live" taping of the forum would discourage audience participation and lead to more logistical problems. Fortunately, the taping went smoothly and provided an excellent product that can be used again. The panelists and moderators appeared apprehensive at times, possibly due to the camera equipment. This might have been alleviated by a complete run-through a day or two prior to the forum. However, because planners did not want the session to be too structured, an informal dinner was served instead, just before the event as a way of reviewing the evening's agenda. Overall, program logistics moved smoothly.

Providing Closure. Evaluations were completed by thirty percent of those who attended. A number of follow-up strategies were suggested. Participants also signed up to be notified of future activities and/or discussions. Several members of the planning committee will utilize this information to assist the mayor in establishing his task force.

In addition, a networking opportunity followed the program, which the steering committee had not initially anticipated. Due to the two-hour time frame, no breaks were provided during the session. But because refreshments were served at the end of the session, there was informal time for free-flowing discussion and networking to occur.

Key Recommendations

1. Ensure that the forum can become a catalyst—the first of several. It is important to take advantage of the enthusiasm and commitment that is generated.

2. Be sure to clearly identify the forum's focus and then provide careful background on the issue to the audience.

3. When choosing a forum coordinator, anticipate issue(s) that might develop. The coordinator needs to have a grasp of the problem. If this person has only a cursory knowledge of the subject area, a cofacilitator with the necessary expertise should also be appointed.

4. Maintain constant communication with concerned agencies, especially if the issue is particularly sensitive.

5. Consider the following steps in developing an effective steering committee: gather names of potential committee members by researching agency lists and consulting key agency staff and college personnel; hold an orientation session for potential members to summarize project goals, timelines, and commitment needs; select members for the steering committee based on input received from the orientation session and the indicated level of commitment; and conduct a training session for committee members on the process and the topic.

Building Economic Futures in Southern-Most Dallas County

Cedar Valley College of the Dallas County Community College District

James Harlow

Executive Summary

The forum, "Building Economic Futures in Southern-Most Dallas County," was held on September 15, 1992, at Cedar Valley College. It brought together local leaders and community members to consider the emerging economic changes in that region and focus on the possible impact that these changes will have for the region. It is hoped this program will become the first in a series of community forums sponsored by the college to help establish an ongoing dialogue regarding critical issues in the local community. For further information, contact James Harlow, Vice President of Student Development, Cedar Valley College, 3030 N. Dallas Avenue, Lancaster, Texas 75134.

Issue Overview

The traditional service area of Cedar Valley College is located in the southern-most portion of Dallas County. This geographic region has historically been less economically developed than the northern sector of the county. Recently, however, a number of promising initiatives have emerged that could have significant economic impact on this region.

Developments that are either currently underway or proposed in the near future include:

- The completion of the federally funded and internationally recognized Superconducting Super Collider (SSC). The SSC is a high energy subatomic accelerator that will be used in basic research to learn more about the fundamental nature of matter and energy. When completed in 1999, it will be the most powerful such accelerator in the world.

- The proposed construction of a reliever airport for the Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport. In current plans, the new airport will be located one mile from Cedar Valley College.

- The proposed development of the Texas High Speed Rail Authority's "bullet train" that would travel through southern Dallas County. The state of Texas, in conjunction with private industry, is studying the feasibility of constructing the line to run between Dallas, San Antonio, and Houston. Should the rail system go into effect, it will run near the airport, enhancing many economic possibilities in the area.

- The buildout of the recently created Free Trade Zone, which is located just north of the proposed airport site, will theoretically make it possible to receive goods from all over the world, assemble them in the zone, and ship them on to world markets.

Event Summary

The forum was structured around a comprehensive morning session that included four distinct parts: a welcoming segment led by the chancellor of the Dallas County Community College District, William Wenrich, and the college president, Carol Spencer; keynote presentations by futurist David Zach and demographer Paul Geisel; presentations by representatives from the various emerging economic areas; reactions to earlier presentations from a panel of community leaders.

Welcome. A breakfast was held in the cafeteria for all program participants and numerous community members. John McCaa,

a local TV news anchor, greeted the guests and briefly discussed the morning's activities. The president and chancellor welcomed the group to Cedar Valley College and the Dallas County Community College District. The chancellor spoke briefly on the DCCCD's effort to assist communities in the region through the Southern Dallas Initiative.

Keynote Speakers. Futurist David Zach spoke to the group about the nature of change in modern communities in America. Zach is a nationally recognized futurist who has assisted many communities over the last several years to visualize what change means to them and then assess how to best manage these processes for the collective good. In other words, he specializes in helping communities develop a community dialogue to better understand themselves and their potential.

Following Zach, Paul Geisel, professor of urban affairs and public policy at the University of Texas at Arlington, addressed the changing nature of demographics in the area. Geisel is a highly respected international urbanologist who has published widely in the area of community development. He presented the most recent 1990 census data and other pertinent information gathered from a variety of business and governmental sources. Additionally, Geisel discussed the most pressing needs and challenges facing the region.

Presentations on Emerging Economic Areas. The following also made presentations: Bill Gaither, city manager of Lancaster, Texas, discussed the I-45 Corridor Airport Alliance and the Texas High Speed Rail Authority; Joe McElroy, executive officer of Southport, Inc., discussed the impact of the Free Trade Zone; and Richard Biggs, chief administrator of the Superconducting Super Collider, explained the current status of the SSC which currently provides thousands of jobs and will provide more.

Question and Answer Session. Following presentations by keynote speakers and representatives of emerging economic areas in the region, local community leaders conducted an open forum with the guests and audience. The session was formatted as a talk show. In general, questions focused on the large projects such as the I-45 Airport and the SSC project, and on the economic impact and employment opportunities they would promote.

Evaluation and Follow-Up. The conference was built on the student and staff needs of Cedar Valley College, coupled with the needs and interests of the local community. Topics were developed by students, faculty, and community members.

During planning for the conference, new opportunities presented themselves. For example, the Best Southwest Chambers of Commerce, which represents the area's suburban cities, began an active dialogue with the Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce and the Dallas Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Additionally, community leaders from rural areas began to talk to the urban leaders. This dialogue across racial lines, geographic regions, and municipal areas was an important outcome.

Conference evaluations indicated that the event was a success both for Cedar Valley College and the community. The president will follow-up with the participants to develop additional programs which the community believes are critical. In addition, the format and processes used to develop the conference will be used by the college to determine future community programming needs.

Key Recommendations

1. Create opportunities for groups not currently in dialogue to talk to one another.

2. Let the conference build from the needs of students, staff, and the community.

3. Dialogue with community leaders during the forum's planning phase.

4. Be prepared to build on the positive public relations the conference generates.

5. Keep the forum's planning processes in place after the event to respond to future community needs. Build on these structures.

Appendix
Using Surveys and Data-Capture Technology in Support of Community Forums

Tom Busakowski and Will Chatham

The purpose of community forums is to bring together individuals from a variety of constituent groups of a community to work together to address persistent community problems. This monograph has focused on the role of community colleges in acting as a convener and organizer of such forums, and colleges have considerable resources to bring to bear in carrying out the role as organizer.

The tools that colleges have to assist in organizing and conducting community forums include the ability to conduct surveys and community research. Many colleges have offices of institutional research and considerable staff expertise and computing capability necessary to support research efforts. However, even colleges that do not have existing research offices have ready access to a range of survey instruments and computer-assisted, data-capture technology with which to support community forums. Such tools can assist forum organizers at a number of steps in the process.

Uses of Surveys and Data-Capture Techniques

Before the Forum. Surveys can be useful in the early stages of organizing the forum to assist in identifying priority concerns. For instance, a survey of a representative sample of community members regarding their greatest concerns or "the most important problem facing our community today" can help in prioritizing the community problems on which a community forum should focus. Such surveys can be open-ended, or they might contain lists of potential concerns with an opportunity to write in problems or concerns not listed. Community colleges are justifiably reluctant to invest precious time and resources organizing forums to address problems that members of the community find of low importance.

When the most pressing problems facing a community are readily apparent, surveys can be used to supplement existing knowledge of the problem. Focused surveys of specific constituent groups can assist in defining the problem to be addressed, while at the same time raising awareness of both the issue and the community forum which is being organized to address the issue. While most colleges have the expertise, they are not likely to conduct comprehensive research studies on community problems such as crime, inadequate housing, or adult illiteracy in the absence of a specific mandate and grant funding for the purpose. Colleges are more likely to use surveys to determine participants' prior perceptions regarding the issue at hand or to collect demographic and experiential data about participants that can help in organizing the forum and assigning participants to representative small groups if these are part of the program.

During the Forum. Another use of surveys in conducting community forums is to collect information about participants and their reactions to ideas being expressed during the forum. For instance, if a community forum is attempting to develop consensus around ways to improve educational opportunities in the community, there are likely to be too many different ideas suggested than can be adequately discussed. Rather than trying to discuss all issues and options, organizers could survey (or poll) participants to determine the ideas they consider most important to address in greater detail. Such polling can be conducted on the spot using readily available data-capture technology that can provide organizers with more sophisticated summary information about participant reactions than can be obtained

by a simple show of hands.

One technique that is often used in large-scale studies, but can also be adapted to assist community forums, is the Delphi technique. The idea is to survey participants about their opinions on an issue or proposed solutions, to report the results of the initial survey, to discuss the results and positions taken by participants, and then to resurvey the group to determine if the discussion is helping to build consensus around any particular position. Research shows that the iterative process of surveying individuals, reporting the results, and resurveying tends to build consensus around the most commonly held opinions, and this technique holds considerable potential for community forums where participants are likely initially to have widely divergent views.

After the Forum. A related use of survey instruments is in evaluation and follow-up. Surveys can be used to evaluate both the conduct and usefulness of the forum. Suggestions for how to organize and conduct a community forum can inform future efforts, and indications of how useful participants thought the forum to be can help college officials assess the value of their efforts to the community—viewed in light of the resource commitment required to conduct the forum.

A survey instrument can even be used to bring closure to a forum by recording participants' votes or consensus on the next course of action to be undertaken. Particularly when a community issue requires some kind of follow-up activity, a concluding survey can help community leaders plan a response and move ahead under the banner and legitimacy of the group consensus.

Perhaps more interesting and powerful is the use of surveys to gauge how effective community forums can be in helping to change people's opinions on issues, especially on issues that tend to be divisive among different groups in the community. If an individual expresses an opinion prior to participating in a forum, does that individual develop a different perspective when presented with more information on the subject? Surveys can be used to track not only changes in opinions of individual participants, but also shifts in attitudes among groups. Since conflict often arises out of ignorance or lack of appreciation of other points of view, follow-up surveys might be useful in documenting the positive effects of community forums in bringing different constituent groups closer together and assisting them to take collective action.

Tips in Survey Construction

While this appendix will not try to summarize entire textbooks on survey construction, there are a few basic guidelines on how to construct surveys that can be used to organize and conduct community forums.

Purpose. It is important to be able to define and state in one or two sentences the specific purpose of the survey. What does the survey hope to accomplish? What exactly do organizers want to know? Who will be surveyed? How will the information resulting from the survey be used?

Brevity and Simplicity. It almost goes without saying that surveys should be as brief as possible—that is, no longer than is necessary to accomplish their purpose. The explicitly stated purpose of the survey should be to limit strictly the questions included on the survey. Questions included because information would be "nice to know" or that are in any way tangential to the purpose of the survey must be eliminated.

Also, the characteristics of the group to be surveyed should carefully guide the language and complexity of the survey. For general populations of citizens, for example, the survey should be geared to the reading level of an eighth grader—as newspapers are. Questions that are contingent upon other questions—if 'yes,' go to page 21," etc.—should be avoided as much as possible.

In general, then, surveys should be as brief and simple as possible. For use in organizing community forums, they should be limited to a single page and written using simple language.

Ease of Completion. Related to brevity and simplicity is the third key characteristic of an effective survey instrument—easy to complete.

In most cases, surveys that pose questions that require respondents to check multiple choice answers are the easiest to fill out, the most likely to be completed, and, therefore, the most desirable. Since multiple-choice questions are the core of survey instruments that can be electronically scored and summarized, they are almost a prerequisite for surveys that need to be tabulated immediately during a forum, or for which there are large numbers of respondents. Open-ended questions are usually best reserved as the last items of a survey and for surveys that do not require immediate analysis.

Another tip for obtaining complete responses is to position questions so that they represent a logical progression from simple to more complex questions. Most respondents will complete a couple of complicated ending questions if they have already invested the time to complete the first questions on the survey. However, complex initial questions tend to drive away respondents.

Sponsorship and Rationale. A final key ingredient of a well-designed survey is the clarity with which it identifies the group or groups sponsoring the survey, the rationale or reasons the survey is being conducted, and the way that survey results will be used. In many cases, assurances the responses will be kept confidential are also helpful to increasing response rates. However, the key is to give respondents reason to believe that the survey serves a legitimate purpose in which they have some stake. If a city council surveys its community to determine how police officers should be deployed to ensure community safety, those surveyed are likely to respond if they are convinced that the city council will listen to their suggestions and concerns.

Another general rule of thumb is that surveys are most likely to be seen as legitimate if they are professionally printed, but avoid being overly "slick."

Using NCS Data-Capture Tools

Surveys have become particularly useful to assist colleges to organize and conduct community forums since computer-assisted tools are now readily available to design, administer, and score user-developed survey instruments. For the League for Innovation project described in this monograph, National Computer Systems, a partner with the League in working to apply information technology to the challenges facing community colleges, offered the use of its data-capture software to colleges organizing community forums as parts of this project.

NCS recognized a particular fit for two of its most commonly used products for survey design and scoring: Survey Network, which enables participating colleges to design and print their own customized surveys, and MicroTest Survey and Score II Plus software, which allows forum organizers to include their own multiple-choice questions on a preprinted survey form for weighted and clustered responses to multiple-choice questions. Both applications produce surveys that can be scored and summarized almost instantaneously using optical mark reading technology. Thus, both NCS products could be used to collect information about respondents and their perceptions and opinions during any phase of the forum—before, during, and after.

Phoenix College was one of the colleges that accepted the NCS offer and is a good example of how the technology can be used to assist in the conduct of community forums. Representatives from the college and the company met to identify specific applications. The college had determined a need to address the issue of housing and its relationship to education and employment in the Phoenix area. Recognizing that several government and public and private agencies were concerned with housing issues, but that a coordinated effort was lacking, a priority was set to bring together the various interested parties for a meaningful dialogue. Organizers thought it was important that participants in the forum be assigned to small groups that had equal representation from school districts, government, community organizations, citizens' groups, and religious organizations.

Using the Survey Network product, NCS

designed and printed a registration survey to gauge participant interest and capture demographic data. The college mailed the survey with its letter of invitation to potential registrants. As returned registrations were scanned, Survey Network performed the administrative task of evaluating the demographic information and placing participants into subgroups.

Cognizant of the fact that a forum is not an end unto itself, college organizers realized the necessity of evaluating the effectiveness of the effort. Would issues be clarified, views altered, perceptions changed? Would participants feel that results were achieved? In order to analyze those complex questions, the survey again became a valuable tool. NCS MicroTest Survey software enabled the college to design a survey that would allow participants to express opinions via multiple-choice questions. Additionally, the software produced reports tailored to the needs of the college, including cross tabulation, frequency tabulation, and a correlation matrix.

The college administered the survey at the beginning of the forum to determine how much participants knew about housing in the Phoenix area, how accurate was their knowledge, and about what were they concerned? Using their own NCS OpScan 5 scanner, college officials were able to immediately tabulate results. It was possible, therefore, to have at the outset an overview of issues as perceived by a cross-section of forum participants. Had forum leaders chosen to do so, they could have tailored discussions based upon survey results.

At the conclusion of the forum, participants completed an identical survey. Scanned results enabled college organizers to evaluate whether perceptions had altered, knowledge levels increased, or concerns changed. It was possible to give meaningful feedback to forum participants regarding clarification of issues and recommendations for further action.

The survey, then, in this particular situation, performed what could have been time-consuming administrative tasks and provided valuable tools for enhancing the effectiveness of the forum. Electronic data capture enabled Phoenix College to assess, measure, evaluate, analyze, and report the effectiveness of its housing forum.

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